2018 COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

NOW 232 PAGES

ATHLON SPORTS

SEC

THE LARGEST AND MOST ACCURATE SEC PREVIEW

SEC COVERAGE

IT'S TIME TO WIN AT A&M

GEORGIA-BAMA A 5-YEAR WAR

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE LSU OFFENSE

INSIDE

STAR FOR A DAY ONE-HIT WONDERS

THE ODD JOURNEY OF A JUCO QB

HERM EDWARDS WHY?

PLUS

- PLAYOFF PICKS
- RECRUITING RANKINGS
- ANONYMOUS SCOUTING REPORTS
- YOUR TEAM'S 5 KEY STATS



FLORIDA RB JORDAN SCARLETT

DISPLAY UNTIL AUGUST 20, 2018

85 >

$9.99

0 74851 11351 6

ATHLON PUBLICATIONS

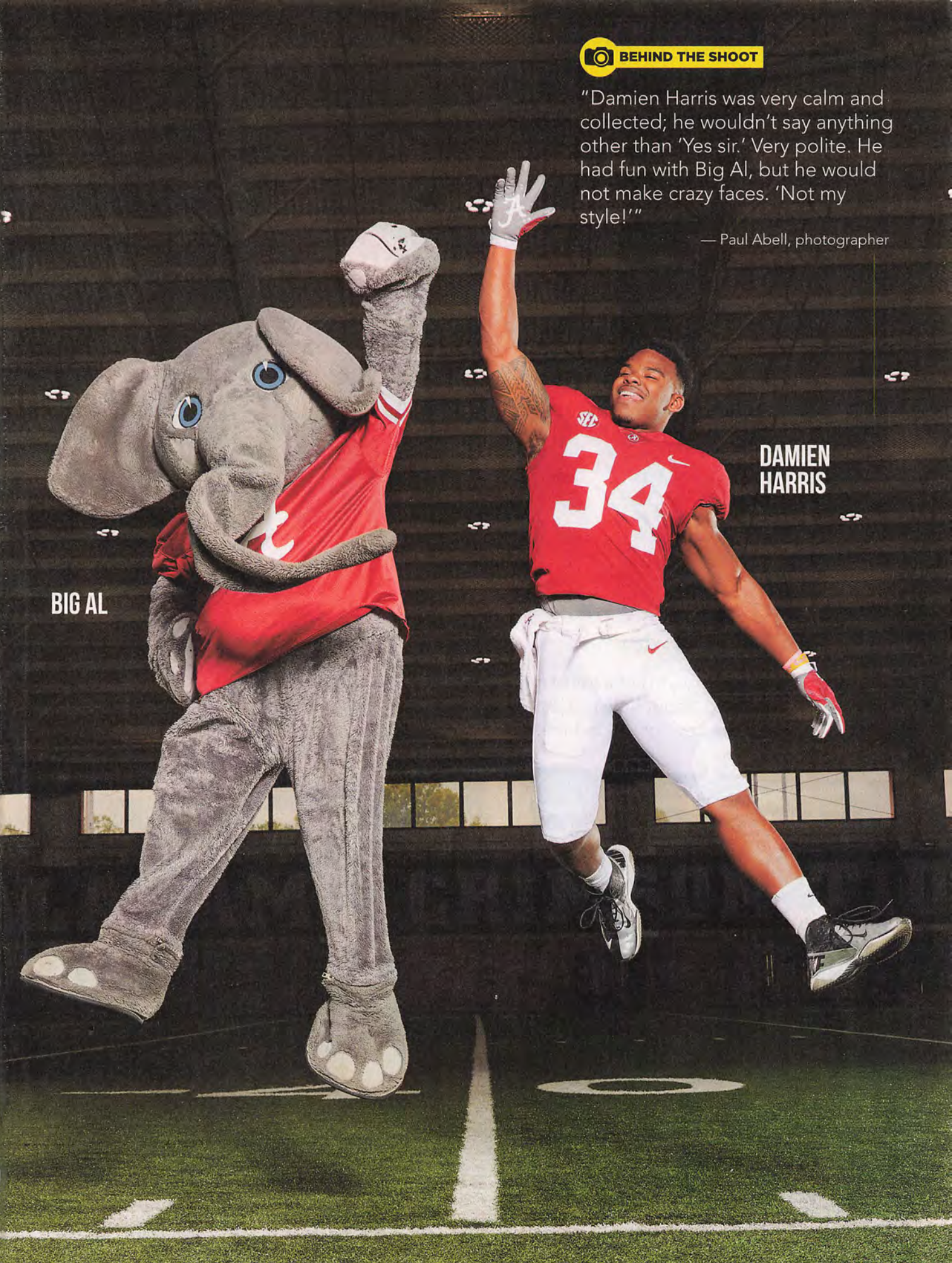
NEW!

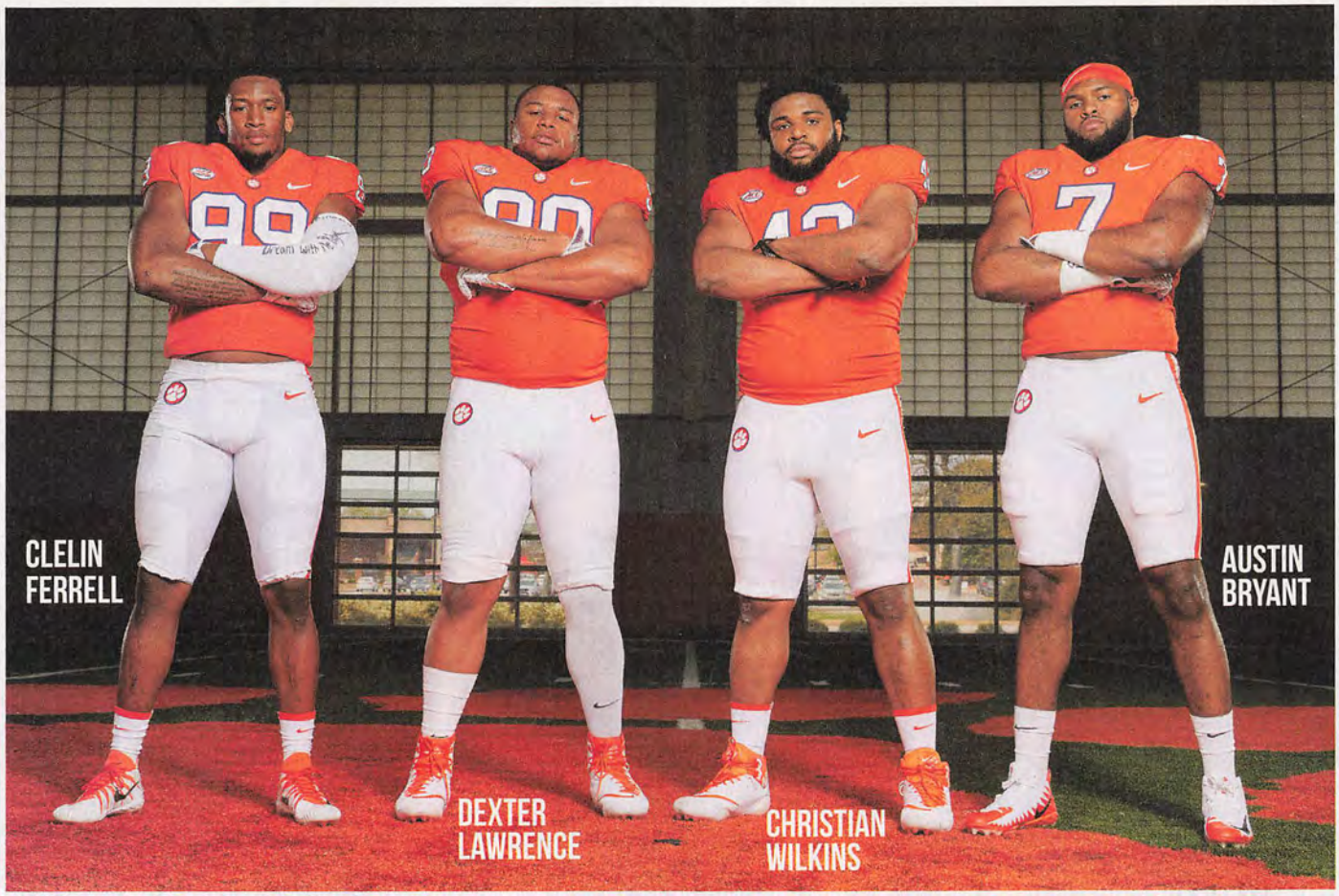
PLANTERS CRUNCHERS

• A CRUNCH INSIDE A CRUNCH •






BEHIND THE SHOOT
"Damien Harris was very calm and collected; he wouldn't say anything other than 'Yes sir.' Very polite. He had fun with Big Al, but he would not make crazy faces. 'Not my style!'"
— Paul Abell, photographer
DAMIEN HARRIS
BIG AL



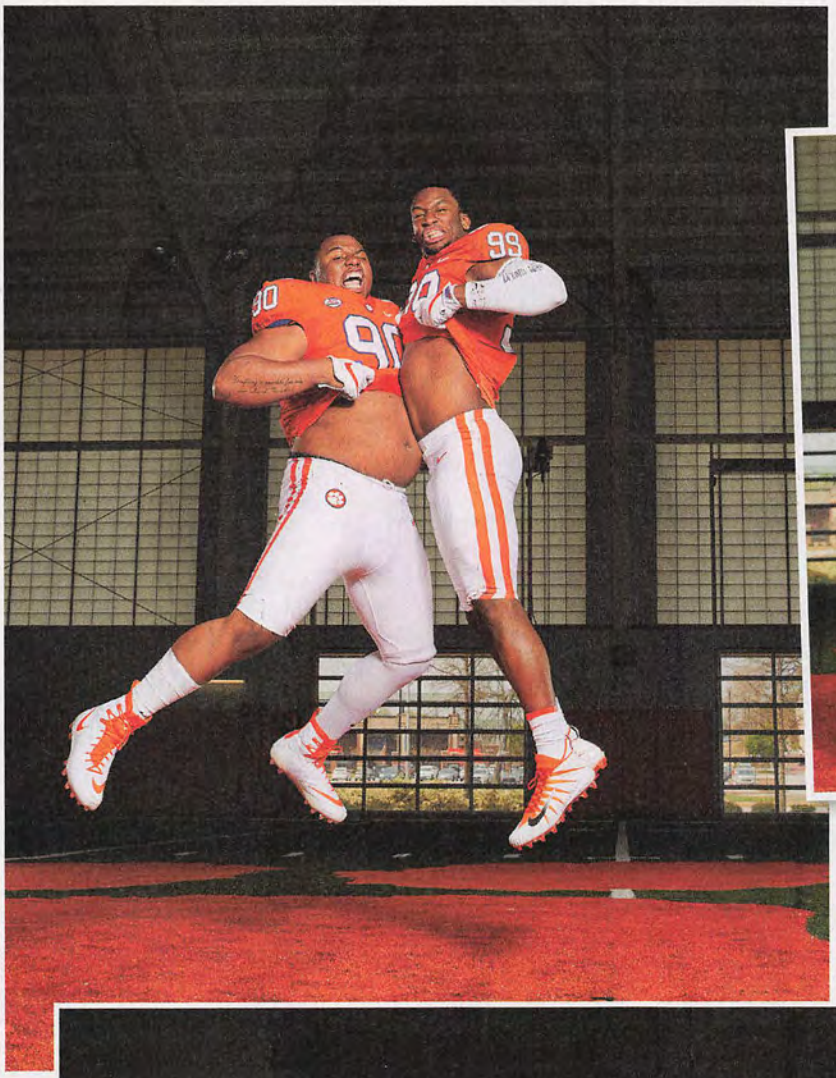
BEHIND THE SHOOT

"All those guys had a lot of fun. They mainly heckled each other but kept remarking about how great they looked. Then they made fun of each other when the key light didn't fire: They said, 'We're so big, we blocked the sun!'"

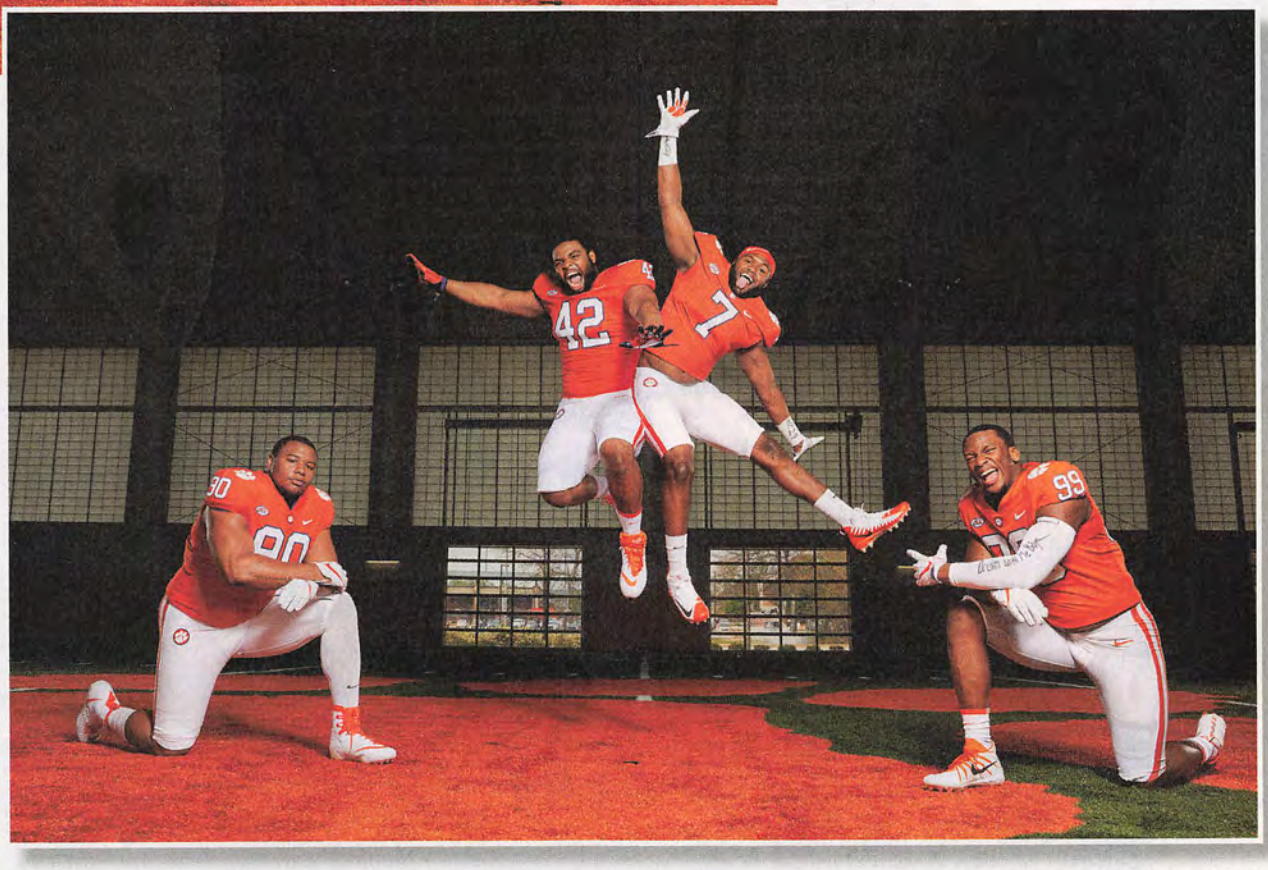
— Paul Abell, photographer













NICK BOSA

BEHIND THE SHOOT

"Before the action shots, I told Nick, 'This has to look real, so you need to go close to full speed. The closer you get to me the better. Please don't run over me. I'm pretty sure it would kill me.' He looked down, laughed and said, 'Okay, I'll do my best.'"

— Matt Hernandez, photographer



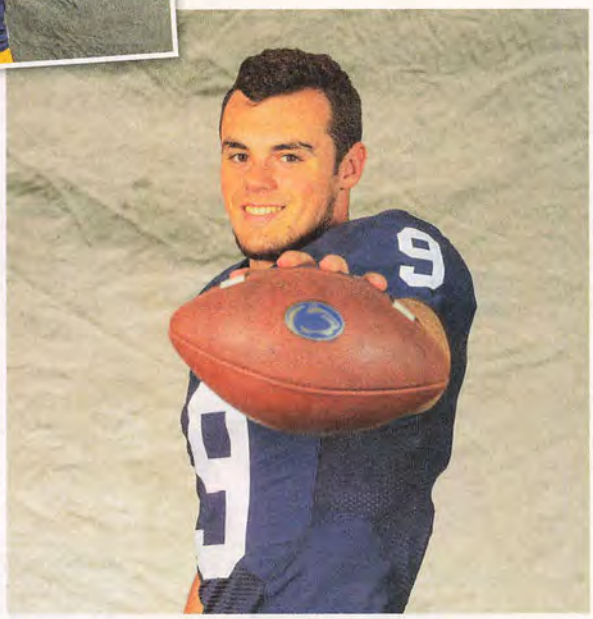




BEHIND THE SHOOT

"During the shoot, I asked David to look at me while he was catching. For that reason, he missed quite a few of the passes Will was throwing to him."

— Fred Vuich, photographer





BEHIND THE SHOOT

"I was at Penn State for the cover shoot the day before the NCAA Tournament started and was heading to Pittsburgh to shoot the first two rounds. Trace is a big college basketball fan. We talked a lot about basketball and what goes into photographing the event."

— Fred Vuich, photographer

"Jarrett couldn't wear pads because he is still recovering from shoulder surgery. As you can see, he could throw the ball, but he couldn't put the pads on yet."

— Paul Abell, photographer

QUESTION

What is your favorite college football memory?

As a fan of the sport, the Kick Six was the most amazing play I've seen. As a student at Vanderbilt, it would be Jeff Owen's game-winning field goal at Ole Miss in 1991.

EDITORIAL

Mitchell Light
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Robert T. Doster III
SENIOR EDITOR

Rushing the rain-soaked field as a student when Vanderbilt beat Tennessee 28–21 in 1982. The goalpost was covered in Vaseline, but it came down anyway.

John Gworek
SENIOR EDITOR

Steven Lassan
SENIOR EDITOR

Daly Cantrell
SENIOR DESIGNER

Watching from the Ole Miss student section (as a recent alum) when Ole Miss beat Alabama 23–17 in 2014 & then storming the field where the goalpost came down!

Amy Reid
SENIOR DESIGNER

Getting locked in Scott Stadium in Charlottesville, Va., after the 1990 Georgia Tech-Virginia football game.

Harrison McClary
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Martin Brady
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Watching Leo Brady (my son) play tight end for Loras College against Cornell College in 2006.

Watching Ohio State win a national championship — with its third-string quarterback!

Megan Imwalle
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Julian Council
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Cole Doster
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The Tennessee-Kentucky game in 1997 was the last game for our son, Brent, a walk-on at Kentucky. He was also a huge UT fan. UT won 59–31, and the more lopsided the score, the more he got to play. At the end, he was smiling ear to ear, because he just had gotten to play against his favorite team.

John Glennon
ASSISTANT EDITOR

CORPORATE

Chuck Allen
PRESIDENT, CEO

Watching Tim Tebow win two National Championships!! And being the first college sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy.

Mary Lee Vanderkooi
CFO/TREASURER

Tracey Altman
EVP

Lisa Delaney
SVP/CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

A pre-Cotton Bowl New Year's Eve party, where a friend of mine sneaked on stage and pretended he was a Texas A&M yell leader.

Marie Tassini
SVP/DIRECT RESPONSE

Amy Chernoff
SVP/GROUP PUBLISHER INTEGRATED MEDIA

Watching Arkansas QB Clint Stoerner stumble and fumble vs. Tennessee in 1998.

Richard McVey
VP/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Mike McCracken
VP OF DIGITAL

Storming the Commonwealth Stadium field as a senior after Kentucky beat Alabama for the first time in 75 years in 1997.

Matt Taliaferro
EXECUTIVE DESIGN DIRECTOR

Alabama-LSU under the lights in Baton Rouge!

Katie Hilton
MARKETING AND EVENTS DIRECTOR

PRODUCTION

The Kick Six.

Mark Malone
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

Sam Payne
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Miracle at South Bend (Tennessee's 35–34 comeback win over Notre Dame in 1991).

Jim Call
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Mike Gregory
PRE-MEDIA MANAGER

Cal vs Stanford in 1982. As a former band geek, I thought it was funny when the player ran into the band in the end zone to win the game.

Gina Carbonara
PRE-MEDIA OPERATOR

ATHLON SPORTS RADIO

Braden Gall

BUSINESS LOGISTICS

Susan Clifft Malone
DIRECTOR

Stop and Pop – Ike Hilliard, 1997 Sugar Bowl.

ATHLON SPORTS

@athlonsports
/athlonsports
www.athlonsports.com

We want to know what you think. Email: editor@athlonsports.com

Magazine mail order:
(877) 528-4566
athlonsports.com/store

For Business Logistics inquiries:
615-440-5580

2451 Atrium Way, Suite 320
Nashville, TN 37214
(800) 284-5668

ATHLON SPORTS BUNDLE

SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE NOW
GET ALL 7 FOR ONE LOW PRICE!



For the first time ever, subscribe to the suite of Athlon Sports preseason magazines **BEFORE THEY HIT NEWSSTANDS.**

☑ **ONE-YEAR** for only $39.97

Athlon Media Group
Attn: Subscriptions
2451 Atrium Way, Ste 320 | Nashville, TN 37214
OR CALL 1-800-284-5668

Each issue will be received as it is published. Please note that specific team covers are not included in this subscription. The national cover version for each sport will be the cover received in this subscription. Titles are $90.58 if purchased separately ($9.99 each plus shipping and handling).

Name

Address

City State Zip

Email (your email address will not be shared with third parties)

Phone

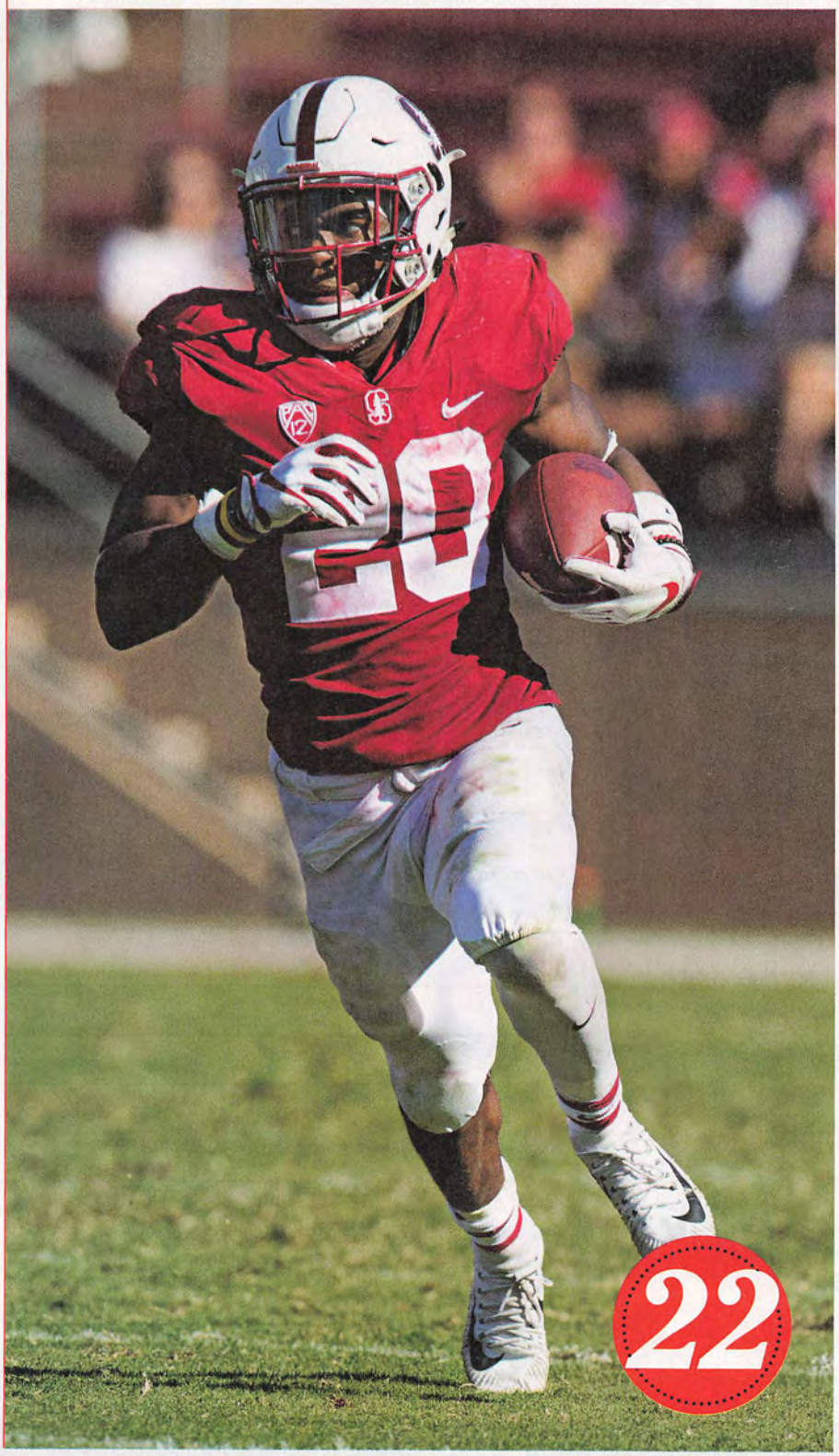
☐ Payment Enclosed (Make checks payable to Athlon Media Group)
Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

Card No. Exp. Date

Signature ATSP18CFB

SUBSCRIBE NOW! ATHLONSPORTS.COM/STORE

CONTENTS



12
PRESEASON TOP 25
A sixth title for Saban's Tide?

20
CONFERENCE & BOWL PREDICTIONS

22
ALL-AMERICA TEAM

26
ATHLON AWARDS

30
EXTRA POINTS
QB battles, hot-seat coaches and more

48
TEAMS ON THE RISE
Which teams are poised to surprise in 2018?

52
EDITORS ROUNDTABLE
Athlon's brain trust answers this season's big questions

56
COORDINATORS ROUNDTABLE
Some of CFB's top minds assess today's game

62
HERM EDWARDS: WHY?
It was the offseason's most puzzling hire. Will it work?

66
NEXT CHANCE U
The long, strange trip of a junior college QB



HALF RESTAURANT. HALF STORE.
ALL COUNTRY.®

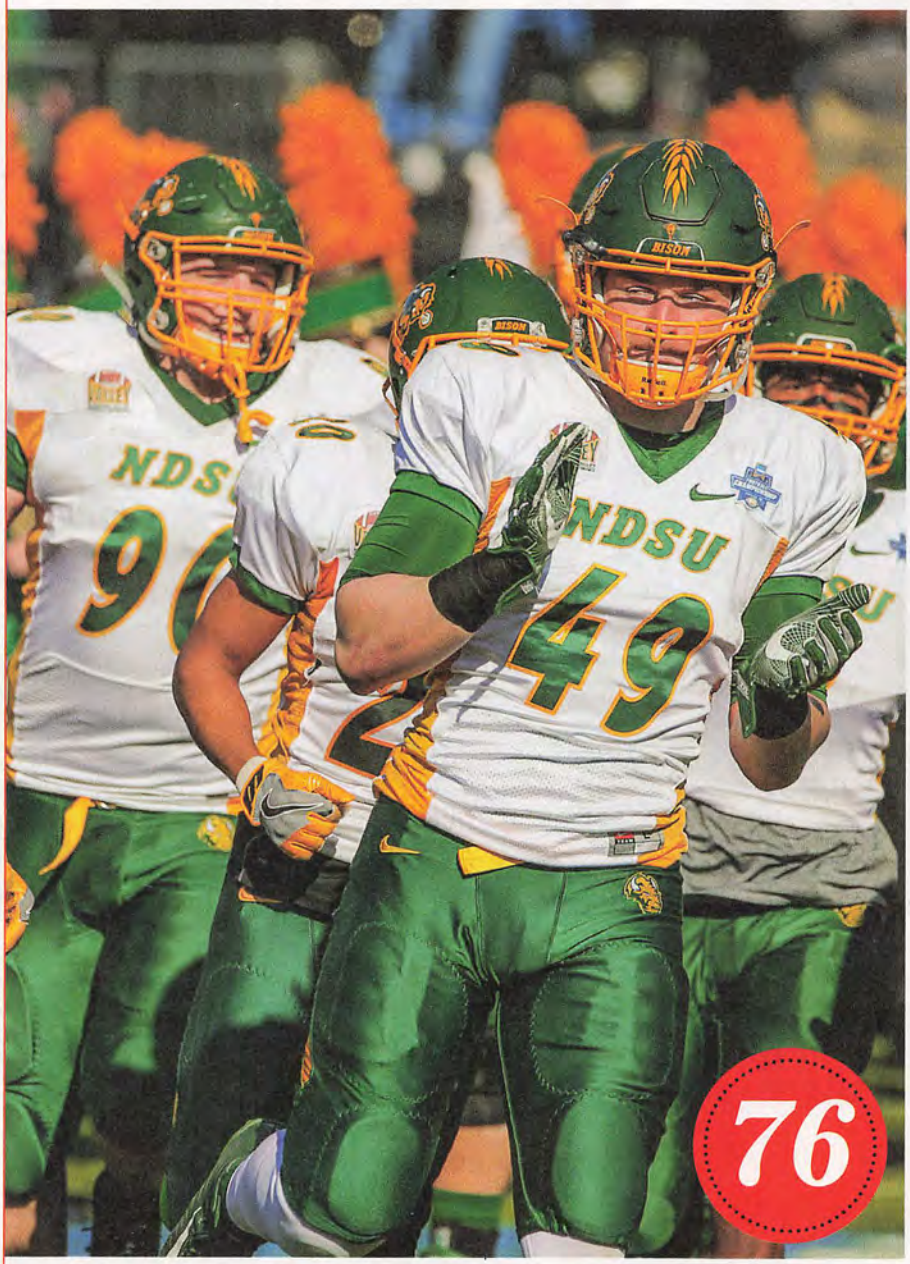
Since 1969, there have been two sides to every Cracker Barrel Old Country Store® location. On one hand, our restaurant serves up good country cookin'. On the other, there's a real country store to browse through. And you're always welcome to come visit either. Or, of course, both.

Cracker Barrel
OLD COUNTRY STORE

crackerbarrel.com

EST 1969
SHOP.CRACKERBARREL.COM

"Half Restaurant. Half Store. All Country." and "Cracker Barrel Old Country Store" name and logo are registered trademarks of CBOCS Properties, Inc., Reg. USPTO. ©2018 CBOCS Properties, Inc.



CONTENTS

72
ONE SHINING MOMENT
These unsung players rose to the occasion when the stakes were highest

76
FCS TOP 25
The North Dakota State dynasty marches on

80
RECRUITING
There was a new champ in the offseason arms race

92
SCHEDULES

98
SIDELINE SPIRIT

104
TAILGATING 2018

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Parrish Alford, Mark Anderson, Mike Anthony, Greg Archuleta, Jason Arkley, Mike Ashley, Bob Asmussen, Mike Babcock, Stephen Baily, Nick Baumgardner, Joe Bendel, Andy Bitter, Al Blondin, Bret Bloomquist, Ian Boyd, Rick Bozich, Michael Bradley, Jonah Bronstein, Chip Brown, Olin Buchanan, Michael Casagrande, Drew Champlin, Keff Ciardello, Bill Connelly, Graham Couch, Matt Crossman, Mike DeBabo, Joseph Duarte, Seth Emerson, Jeff Faraudo, Bryan Fischer, Robert Gagliardi, Joe Giglio, Steven Godfrey, Andy Greder, Mike Griffith, Tom Groeschen, Jason Groves, Steve Guiremand, Jon Hale, Craig Haley, Zack Hall, Greg Hansen, Shawn Harrison, Pat Harty, Nolan Hayes, John Helsley, Brandon Helwig, Matt Herb, Jerry Hill, Kelly Hines, Matt Hinton, Joey Johnston, Chris Karpman, Joey Kaufman, Hugh Kellenberger, Mike Kern, Chuck King, Kurt Kragthorpe, Adam Kurkjian, Tom Layberger, Theo Lawson, Chris Level, Ferd Lewis, Tom Luicci, Kelly Lyell, Matt Markey, Carlos Mendez, Ted Miller, Allen Moff, Danny Moran, Rob Moseley, Tom Murphy, Bobby Narang, Jesse Newell, Bill Nichols, Jim Polzin, Matt Porter, Tim Prister, Scott Rabalais, Dan Raley, Dave Ramsey, Jeff Rapp, Kellis Robinett, Mark Schmetzer, Nate Schneider, Ira Schoffel, Stephen Schramm, Guerry Smith, Damien Sordelett, Dave Southorn, Adam Sparks, Brad Stephens, Matthew Stevens, Phil Stukenborg, Mike Sullivan, Edgar Thompson, Jacob Thorpe, Grant Traylor, Bill Trocchi, Kevin Turbeville, Matt Vautour, Mitch Vingle, Bill Wagner, Greg Wallace, Marek Warszawski, Lindsey Wilhite, Chris Williams, Brad Wilkerson, Larry Williams, Dan Wolken

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: Clemson, Stidham, Harris, Fromm, Bentley: Paul Abell; Akers: Don Juan Moore/Getty Images; Marshall: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; J. Smith: John Sommers II; Richards: Richard C. Lewis/Icon Sportswire via AP Images; Finley: Chris Keane; Ratliff-Williams: Grant Halverson/Getty Images; Thornhill: Lee Coleman/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images; Montgomery, Reagor, Taylor, Stanley, Lewerke: Tom Lynn; C. Smith, Love, Tate: Peter Brouillet; Barnes, Locke: Tim Umphrey; Hill: Bruce Schwartzman; Grier, Sills, McSorley: Fred Vuich; Smith: David Berding/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images; Frost: Scott Bruhn/NU Communications; Bosa: Matt Hernandez; Dobbins: Scott W. Grau/Icon Sportswire via AP Images; Herbert: David Becker/Getty Images; Kelly: Don Liebig/ASUCLA; Browning: Jevone Moore/Cal Sport Media via AP Images; Agim: Jay Biggerstaff/Athlon Sports; Snell Jr.: Michael Hickey/Getty Images; White: Joe Petro/Icon Sportswire via AP Images; Fitzgerald: Kelly Price; Brown: Andy Lyons/Getty Images; Chandler: Tom DiPace; Williams: Chris Covatta; Shurmur: Joe Howell; Anderson: John Green/CSM via AP Images; Ehlinger: AP Photo/Ron Jenkins; Gary: AP Photo/Carlos Osorio Coney, Davis: Joe Robbins/Getty Images

SUBSCRIBE TODAY



SAVE 59%

Mopar Action is the best-selling Mopar enthusiasts' magazine on the market today. Mopar Action covers the entire world of Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge vehicles, including classics, muscle cars, and race cars.

Each Issue Includes:

- new car road tests
- performance tips and technical advice
- personality profiles
- coverage of major Mopar events
- restoration advice and club news from around the world

If it's Mopar—you'll find it in Mopar Action.

MOPAR ACTION

59% OFF THE NEWSSTAND RATE!

☐ **2-years** (12 issues) for only $31.97
+1 additional issue (13 issues)

☐ **1-year** (6 issues) for only $19.97

Athlon Media Group
Attn: Subscriptions
2451 Atrium Way, Ste 320 | Nashville, TN 37214
or call 1-800-284-5668

Canada add $10 postage, other countries outside U.S. add $20 postage for each year. Pay in U.S. funds only. Payment must accompany orders. Please allow 4-8 weeks delivery for new subscriptions. Mopar Action is published 6 times per year. Cover price is $7.99.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Email (your email address will not be shared with third parties)

Phone

☐ Payment Enclosed
Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

Card No. Exp. Date

Signature

MOPR18CFB

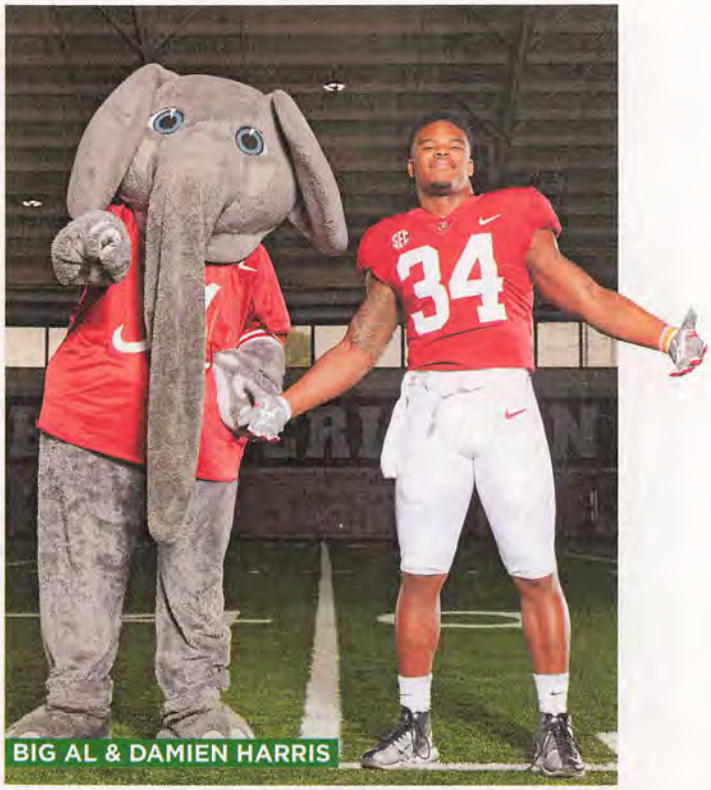
PRESEASON TOP 25

Things sure got strange in the world of college football last year. The national champion didn't win its conference, the champion of the league with the best postseason record didn't even make the playoff, and UCF went undefeated and threw itself a parade.

Can 2018 be even crazier? It will be tough. On the surface, things look pretty basic. Alabama starts on top. Plenty of usual suspects follow. It looks simple.

Until the opening kickoff. Then, look out.

Again.



BIG AL & DAMIEN HARRIS

1. Alabama

Nick Saban earned his fifth national title in Tuscaloosa, smiled and looked genuinely happy. Then, when spring practice came around, it was as if the Tide had lost five games and watched Auburn celebrate a national title by toilet-papering Bryant-Denny Stadium.

That's a good thing for Bama fans. As long as Saban is treating every day like the fourth quarter of a deadlocked Iron Bowl, you can bet the Tide coaches, players, staff, groundskeepers and concession workers are approaching things with a similarly grave perspective. For a program that has created an unprecedented standard of excellence in college football — five national championships in nine years — that's how it's done. Every day is a step toward greatness. Or else.

It seems almost cliché to put the Crimson Tide No. 1, but do you want to bet against Saban's team? We didn't think so. Even if the usual collection of outstanding talent has left Tuscaloosa in search of NFL fame and fortune, you just know the campus is blooming with all sorts of talent ready to step in for those who have left town. Even if some holes exist in the secondary, and Calvin Ridley's departure has left the receiving corps lacking experience, don't worry about the Tide.

Not that there isn't any drama around the program. It begins under center, where Tua Tagovailoa's National Championship Game performance established him as the fan favorite — and perhaps the coaching staff's choice — at quarterback. He's a better passer than Jalen Hurts and has the potential to be an extremely dangerous weapon. Expect Tagovailoa to get the job, and don't be surprised if Hurts ends up seeing time at other offensive positions.

Damien Harris is back after gaining 1,000 yards, scoring 11 times and averaging 7.4 yards per carry. He's a great weapon who can go the distance. The offensive line has four starters back, including Jonah Williams. At receiver, a strong cast of big, young fliers is back.

Yes, there are concerns in the young secondary, but Saban will have that group playing well when it matters. The front seven is stocked with the next wave of stars, especially in the linebacking corps.

2. Clemson

When people search for reasons why Jimbo Fisher left Florida State, they might want to look past the fat paycheck and inspect the collection of talent 375 miles to the north. Dabo Swinney's Tigers may have lost their rubber match with Alabama in last year's national semis, but Clemson is still mighty dangerous and could very well win it all again next January.

The Tigers are clearly the ACC's class, and each season Swinney and his staff lure even more talent to campus. It's not just because of the beach volleyball court, mini-golf and casino (okay, there isn't a casino) in the school's bazillion-dollar football building. Clemson wins big, and that's going to continue this year.

Quarterback Kelly Bryant was strong last year, but he may not be able to beat out true freshman Trevor Lawrence, now that everybody thinks it's okay to play newbies under center. Travis Etienne and Tavien Feaster are strong backs, and Hunter Renfrow is back for his ninth season (or so it seems) to lead the receiving corps. The middle of the line needs some fortification, but five-stars are waiting to step in.

On the other side of the ball, ends Clelin Ferrell (18 tackles for a loss, 9.5 sacks) and Austin Bryant (15.5, 8.5) are frightening, and linebacker Kendall Joseph is a tackling machine.

Harris: Paul Abell; Bosa: Matt Hernandez

3. Georgia

If it's possible for a 13–2 season to be a disappointment, the Bulldogs' 2017 campaign qualifies. So many good things happened for UGA last year, beginning with Jake Fromm's emergence as a true freshman quarterback capable of leading the team to the SEC title, to the wild national semifinal win over Oklahoma, to taking the lead in overtime against Alabama in the Big One.

In one play, it all fell apart. Tua Tagovailoa's 41-yard TD pass to DeVonta Smith consigned Georgia to an asterisk on Nick Saban's championship résumé and an offseason of what-ifs.

So much talent returns that the Dawgs could well meet Saban's Tide again this year, either in the SEC title game or the playoffs. Fromm was obviously terrific as a true freshman, but there is another five-star rookie on campus — dual threat Justin Fields — who might be too good to sit. Sophomore D'Andre Swift has the potential to be a big star at running back, while wideout Terry Godwin has big-time speed. The offensive line, which returns four starters and has plenty of depth, will again be excellent.

There are some big losses on defense, most notably all-world linebacker Roquan Smith. But safety J.R. Reed is a big-time talent, and teams that challenge corner Deandre Baker are foolish. Linebacker Natrez Patrick has the skill to be a great one (if he can remain in good standing), and end Jonathan Ledbetter and tackle Tyler Clark are both All-SEC candidates.

4. Ohio State

You can bet the Buckeyes are still stinging after last year's snub by the CFB Playoff Selection Committee, despite an 11–2 record and the Big Ten title. Certainly, that 31-point pasting at the hands of Iowa sullied OSU's résumé, but Urban Meyer's team had a pretty solid argument for inclusion, and the Buckeyes head into 2018 with plenty of motivation to leave no doubt about whether they belong.

Before it can make any sort of claim to postseason glory, Ohio State must find a quarterback to replace the departed J.T. Barrett. Dwayne Haskins showed last year that he was plenty dangerous under center, but talented youngster Tate Martell and savvy veteran Joe Burrow will also have an opportunity to win the job. Top running backs J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber return to fuel the ground game, although the offensive line needs a few fortifications, and the receiving corps needs to mature.

The Buckeyes' loaded defense will get a boost from new co-coordinator Alex Grinch, who has been nominated for the Broyles Award three times. He'll really like working with end Nick Bosa, who had 8.5 sacks and 16 tackles for a loss last year and is poised to be one of the nation's best defensive linemen in '18.

In the rugged Big Ten East, the Buckeyes still look like the class of the bunch.

5. Michigan

All of the trips to Europe and sleepovers at recruits' houses were supposed to be merely glossy packaging around a big pile of victories, Big Ten championships and national title contention. That was the product Jim Harbaugh and Michigan sold Wolverines fans, but after last season's 8–5 mark, some in the U-M community are looking for the returns counter.

If Harbaugh wants to recapture the excitement that accompanied his hire, he had better inject his offense with a little go-go juice, because last year's outfit was weak. It managed only nine TD passes, the Wolverines' fewest since 1975, when freshman quarterback Rick Leach was piloting an option attack. The Wolverines need stability at quarterback, and the battle between Brandon Peters, Dylan McCaffrey and Ole Miss transfer Shea Patterson (if eligible) could extend until the coin toss of the Wolverines' opener. The O-line has to get tougher, too, and young receivers like Donovan Peoples-Jones and Tarik Black must quickly emerge as playmakers.

The good news is that the defense will once again be bloodthirsty, and that will keep Michigan in every game it plays. Ends Rashan Gary and Chase Winovich are terrors, while hybrid linebacker/safety Khaleke Hudson is a big-play machine. Devin Bush is poised to be one of the best backers in the country, and the secondary has plenty of potential.



NICK BOSA

6. Miami (Fla.)

The undeniable star of the 2017 Hurricanes season was the Turnover Chain, which made an appearance every time the rejuvenated Miami defense forced an opponent to cough up the ball. It was the perfect accessory for The U, but if coach Mark Richt's team is going to continue the prosperity it enjoyed during the first 10 games of last year — and not the three-game losing streak that ended the season — the Hurricanes must get more potent on offense.

That begins with QB Malik Rosier, who showed signs of talent last year but made too many mistakes. He simply must make better decisions — or will be in danger of losing his job. Rosier will be helped by the return of running back Travis Homer (966 yards, 5.9 average) and wideout Ahmmon Richards, who flashed big-play potential before hurting his knee. But the offensive line has to replace two starters.

The Canes were imposing defensively, forcing 31 total turnovers. Senior safety Jaquan Johnson is an all-purpose producer, and linebacker Shaquille Quarterman is stout against the run and pass.

Richt has done a great job making Miami relevant again in the ACC and is backing up a couple good recruiting classes with even more talent. To beat Clemson, the Hurricanes must cut back on mistakes and turn their playmakers loose.

7. Auburn

For a while there, it looked like the Tigers were primed to grab a high seed in the CFB Playoff. They had beaten both Alabama and Georgia and only had to repeat the job against UGA in the SEC title game to gain one of the four coveted spots.

But Auburn lost to the Bulldogs and then looked relatively disinterested in UCF's "national championship game," and the Tigers ended the season with a 10–4 record instead of a Playoff berth. In order to win another West Division title, coach Gus Malzahn's team must rebuild the offensive line, find at least one running back capable of handling regular work and find a couple of safeties.

The good news? J.B. Grimes is back to handle the O-line, and he is top-notch. While the ground game matures, QB Jarrett Stidham and Ryan Davis can play pitch-and-catch, and the Tiger D can stifle opponents again under the direction of Kevin Steele.

Stidham has the potential to become one of the nation's best. He makes good decisions, delivers the ball on target and can move a little bit. Meanwhile, Kam Martin, Asa Martin and JaTarvious Whitlow are the next in line at running back, and it appears as if massive tackle Prince Tega Wanogho is ready to step forward.

Deshaun Davis and Derrick Brown are two names to watch on a retooled Tiger defense.

8. Washington

No pressure here: If the Huskies don't stomp the competition, reach the CFB Playoff and win a game, everybody will say the Pac-12 stinks.

Again.

It's possible that Washington could do all of that, thanks to an abundance of returning talent on both sides of the ball, beginning with quarterback Jake Browning, who is hoping to revert back to his sophomore form when he tossed 43 touchdown passes. Running back Myles Gaskin (1,380 yards, 21 TDs) turned down the NFL for another run at the big time. There's some help needed in the middle of the line, and the receiving corps has to grow up after the departure of Dante Pettis, but Chris Petersen's offenses are always stout.

The defense returns nine starters, and while the loss of defensive front stalwart Vita Vea will hurt, you can expect another big year from a unit that picked off 15 passes and allowed only 16.1 points per game. Linebacker Ben Burr-Kirven and safety Taylor Rapp lead the defense.

We'll learn a whole lot about the Huskies in their opener, when they meet Auburn in Atlanta. It will be a great opportunity for a Pac-12 statement.

Or more of the same.



JARRETT STIDHAM

Stidham: Paul Abell; McSorley: Fred Vuich

9. Wisconsin

It's nice to know that in an era dominated by offenses that seem more willing to play in shorts and tank tops than to mix it up where people get dirty, the Badgers remain ugly and nasty. Those hoping for some sort of spread revolution in Madison had better prepare themselves for an offense with the subtlety of an angry rhinoceros.

Sophomore tailback Jonathan Taylor, whose 1,977 rushing yards in 2017 set an FBS freshman record, returns to hammer away at defenses behind a line that welcomes back all five cheese-fed starters. Expect all the nuance of a presidential tweet.

Alex Hornibrook is back at quarterback, and that's good news, provided he cuts back on his turnovers. But UW isn't about the pass, and if Hornibrook throws it 25 times in a game, that's big news. A.J. Taylor and Quintez Cephus are speedy targets.

There were some losses on defense, but linebacker T.J. Edwards decided that he would return for his senior season after finishing second on the team in tackles. Fellow linebacker Ryan Connelly is no slouch, either. Both players had 11 stops for a loss last year. Watch out for defensive lineman Olive Sagapolu, who has plenty of potential.

The biggest question for the Badgers is whether they can handle whoever meets them from the East in the Big Ten title game. That has been a problem of late, but thanks to that ground game, there is always a chance.

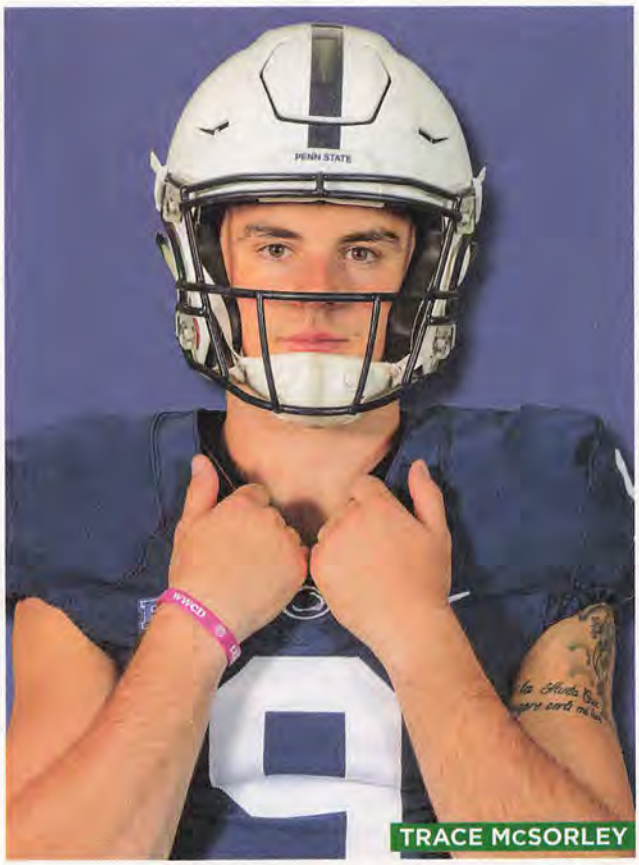
10. Oklahoma

Last year, the Sooners handled the transition from Bob Stoops to Lincoln Riley quite well, winning the Big 12 title and earning a berth in the CFP. This year, they must adjust from Baker Mayfield to Kyler Murray, who apprenticed under Mayfield last year after leaving Texas A&M.

The good news: Murray is a dual-threat type who will add a new dimension to the Sooners' attack. The bad news: He has problems with accuracy and consistency. Plus, he isn't Mayfield, whose personality defined OU for the past three seasons — for better or worse. Oklahoma fans must get used to someone else in charge, and Murray has to convince teammates and everybody else that he can handle the job.

The offensive side isn't alone in having lost its top playmaker. The departure of Ogbonnia Okoronkwo robs the defense of its leader. Yes, linebacker Kenneth Murray has the ability to take a step forward, but he's just a sophomore.

Backs Rodney Anderson and Trey Sermon return to give Murray plenty of cover while he gets comfortable, and receivers Marquise Brown and CeeDee Lamb are reliable targets. Tackle Orlando Brown will be difficult to replace, but the Sooners should be solid on the offensive front. Meanwhile, cornerback Parnell Motley is a strong coverage man who can also help against the run.



TRACE McSORLEY

11. Penn State

Nittany Lions fans no doubt will grieve the loss of dazzling running back Saquon Barkley, but those who are truly forward thinking will be more concerned about the departure of offensive coordinator Joe Moorhead, who took the top job at Mississippi State. Barkley was amazing, but it was Moorhead's scheme and — more important — his ability to make outstanding halftime adjustments that triggered Penn State's rise to prominence. It will be interesting to see how the program survives his absence.

One outstanding key to damage control is quarterback Trace McSorley, who is back for his senior year. McSorley is one of the nation's most exciting players and thrives in all sorts of settings, including broken-play chaos. Junior running back Miles Sanders has a fine pedigree and should have some big moments, but he isn't Barkley. The receiving corps was deep last year, but the losses of tight end Mike Gesicki and wideout DaeSean Hamilton will hurt. Barkley was a big-time target in the passing game, too.

The defense returns only two starters, which wouldn't be a big problem if the offense had the same potency as last year's unit, but without Barkley, Gesicki and Moorhead, that isn't likely to be the case. Linebacker Koa Farmer and end Shareef Miller must step into leadership roles.

The schedule gets tougher, too, thanks to the addition of Wisconsin.

12. Michigan State

While Michigan's Jim Harbaugh gets attention for his world tour and social media antics, MSU boss Mark Dantonio just goes about the business of winning football games. The Spartans have reached double digits in victories six times in the last eight years, including 2017, when Michigan State was supposed to stay mired in the 3-9 hole it occupied the previous season.

Now that the "rebuilding" is complete, don't be surprised if MSU wins at least 10 again. Last year's defense was one of the top outfits in the country, and nine starters return. Linebacker Joe Bachie and end Kenny Willekes may not be household names, but they are productive players with all-league potential. And QBs who test safety David Dowell (five interceptions last year) will be sorry.

Brian Lewerke was a question mark at quarterback heading into 2017, but he exited the season as an exclamation point after becoming the first Michigan State signal caller to pass for 2,500 yards and run for 500 in a season. He'll enjoy throwing again to Felton Davis (55 catches) and handing off to senior running back LJ Scott.

The schedule sets up well for the Spartans, who face Michigan and Ohio State at home and don't have to worry about Wisconsin on the divisional crossover.

13. Florida State

Now that Jimbo Fisher has decided Aggieland is a better place to be than Tallahassee, Willie Taggart is in charge at FSU, and he walks into what could be a pretty good situation. Even though last year was a borderline disaster, due in large part to the torn patellar tendon suffered by QB Deondre Francois in the season opener, the Seminoles are hardly bereft of talent and should be quite formidable. It won't be enough to supplant Clemson, but Taggart should have Florida State in one of the top spots in the ACC.

Francois or sophomore James Blackman — whoever wins the QB derby — will be quite happy to work behind a line that returns four of five starters. He will no doubt enjoy working with sophomore back Cam Akers, who ran for 1,024 yards in his collegiate debut season. Wideout Nyqwan Murray averaged 15.1 yards on his 40 catches last year, but the loss of Auden Tate and his 10 touchdowns will sting.

A lot of work must be done on defense, no matter how potent the FSU attack will be. Brian Burns is a wrecking machine up front, and Levonta Taylor is a stout cover man. By an odd scheduling quirk, FSU opens its season against Virginia Tech, so we'll learn plenty about the Noles right away.

14. Mississippi State

It isn't wrong that Bulldogs fans should mourn Dan Mullen's decision to take over the Florida job. After all, he led MSU to eight straight bowl games and won eight or more games five times in Starkville. But Mississippi State didn't get the booby prize in his replacement, former Penn State offensive coordinator Joe Moorhead. Moorhead has a vividly imaginative football mind and was thought by many to be the individual on the sideline with the primary responsibility for the Nittany Lions' renaissance.

Moorhead found plenty of talent on campus when he arrived at MSU — on both sides of the ball. The defense is led by a couple of pass-rushing specialists, Montez Sweat and Jeffery Simmons. New coordinator Bob Shoop, now on his third SEC stop, will enjoy working with the two of them, as well as senior safety Mark McLaurin, last year's top tackler.

Meanwhile, Moorhead gets to create opportunities for dual-threat quarterback Nick Fitzgerald, who should be completely recovered from the ugly ankle injury he suffered in the Egg Bowl against Ole Miss. The wide receiving corps is a little light, although junior college newcomer Stephen Guidry is a deep threat. The ground attack is led by Aeris Williams, who gained 1,107 yards last year.



CAM AKERS

Akers: AP; Jackson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports


JOSH JACKSON

16. Virginia Tech

The best news about VT isn't that QB Josh Jackson is back for his sophomore year or that Deshawn McClease appears to be a back capable of handling big responsibilities. It's that Bud Foster is coordinating the defense again, and that means that the Hokies will be in just about every game they play. Yes, he has a few holes to fill, but as long as the lunchpail sits on the sidelines, Tech is all right.

The end of last year wasn't the best for the Hokies offense, which averaged just 16.6 points in the final five games, three of which were losses. Jackson had a strong start to the year but must be more consistent over the entire campaign if the Hokies want to reach the ACC title game again. He should be better. It doesn't help that last year's top receiver, Cam Phillips, is gone, but sophomore Sean Savoy showed plenty of potential.

Foster's retooled defense features star power on the defensive line and in the secondary. Defensive tackle Ricky Walker is one of the best in the ACC.

The big question in Blacksburg is whether third-year head coach Justin Fuente can get the Hokies offense crackling the way he was able to unleash attacks at his previous coaching stops. If he can pair a high-flying O with Foster's defense, look out.

15. Notre Dame

It has to be pretty confusing for those who associate Notre Dame exclusively with football to watch the Irish women's basketball team win two national championships — including the 2018 title — since ND last captured one on the gridiron. Those Irish fans are happy to see the banners, but they would rather Brian Kelly's team earn one in early January.

Notre Dame won 10 games for the second time in three years in 2017, using Kelly's renewed commitment to his job and more level-headed approach to coaching — he was markedly less rabid during games — to put together a strong campaign. The question at hand is whether ND can get back into the national discussion, and it seems as if that is still fairly far in the future. Some heavy losses will drain the Irish of several key performers, and a tough schedule that features Michigan, Virginia Tech and Florida State, along with the usual battles with Stanford and USC, makes it tough to imagine the Irish in the CFP discussion.

Before Kelly can look that far ahead, he has to determine whether Brandon Wimbush, who was solid during the regular season, or Ian Book, who looked sharp in the bowl win over LSU, is the man under center. And don't forget about true freshman Phil Jurkovec. Kelly also needs to find some new skill players and replace a pair of standouts on the O-line. And the loss of defensive coordinator Mike Elko hurts, too.

17. Florida

It may confuse some readers to see the Gators rated this highly, after last season's 4–7 belly-flop that cost Jim McElwain his job and was UF's second losing season in the past five years. That's the power of Dan Mullen, who led Mississippi State to eight straight bowl games and is one of the nation's brightest offensive minds.

He'll need every bit of his brainpower to fix the struggling Gator attack, which averaged just 22.1 points in 2017 and has big problems at quarterback. Last year, Feleipe Franks completed just 54.6 percent of his throws and had only nine touchdown passes against eight picks. One of the good things about being a new coach is that there is political capital to spend, and Mullen may just cash in some of his on true freshman Emory Jones, whose dual-threat skills fit Mullen's offense well.

Whoever plays quarterback will need help from a good crop of backs, led by Jordan Scarlett and Lamical Perine, and the receiving corps has to improve. All five starters return on the offensive line. That's good news, except that the unit wasn't very good last year.

Todd Grantham will employ a 3-4 this season and hope that outside linebacker Cece Jefferson can create some havoc, while sophomore corners Marco Wilson and CJ Henderson continue their development into shutdown types.


BRYCE LOVE

18. Stanford

There can be only one reason for this kind of confidence about the 2018 Cardinal: Bryce Love. The 2017 Heisman runner-up announced he would return for his senior year after posting video game-style stats last season — 2,118 rushing yards (on a gaudy 8.1-yard average) and 19 TDs. Having him back on The Farm should make new coordinator Tavita Pritchard's maiden voyage a lot easier. Love has breakaway potential and sees holes at the line with remarkable clarity.

But there is potential for some trouble this year, particularly if quarterback K.J. Costello, who missed spring ball with an unidentified injury, doesn't return to full strength. Pritchard may have to rely on a true freshman in that situation. Hey, it worked for Georgia.

The defense had better wake up, too. The front seven put precious little pressure on opposing QBs last year, making the secondary extremely vulnerable. Love can't do everything.

19. Boise State

Last year, UCF was the Group of 5 big-time bowl representative, and the Knights should be pretty good again, but the main candidate for inclusion with the Power 5 crowd this year is Boise State, which would love to go 14-0 and print up national championship T-shirts, stage a parade and give out rings.

The Broncos have a nice blend of defensive experience, stability at QB and a friendly schedule. Only a Sept. 15 trip to Oklahoma State looks imposing (both Fresno State and San Diego State visit Albertson's Stadium).

That's not to say everything will be easy. QB Brett Rypien had some fine performances last year, but he was also shaky at times. And with top targets Cedrick Wilson and Jake Roh gone, it's up to Sean Modster and A.J. Richardson to step up. Runner Alexander Mattison is back, but the O-line struggled at times last year.

Tackling machine Tyson Maeva returns at linebacker to lead a defense that returns nine starters and should be good enough to keep Mountain West foes at bay.

20. Texas

Tom Herman's second year in Austin has one overriding theme: Fix the offense. Last year's outfit managed more than 24 points only seven times, and even though UT scored 33 in the bowl win over Missouri, there is plenty of work to do.

It begins on the offensive line, which hasn't come close to being dominant in a decade. Herman hired stalwart coach Herb Hand to rejuvenate the unit, but it will take some time. Should Hand turn things around, the moribund Longhorn ground attack will improve. How bad was it last year? The leading rusher was QB Sam Ehlinger, with just 381 yards. That's not going to get it done in the pinball machine Big 12, where it seems like everybody but Kansas scores 50 every week.

The defense has some promise, particularly if the defensive backfield emerges. The good news is that Texas has loaded up on the recruiting trail with talented young safeties and cornerbacks for the past couple years. A good offense is vital in the Big 12, but teams had better be able to defend against the pass.

21. USC

The big story in Troy, of course, is the loss of QB Sam Darnold and the battle to replace him. But those fans of USC who spend all of their time focusing on what happens under center will miss the real plot line for the Trojans: The two lines. Last year's offensive front allowed 30 sacks. The defensive front wasn't so great, either, and that needs to change quickly.

USC is likely to take a step backward this year, in big part due to the lines but also because of the QB question. Sophomore Matt Fink and redshirt freshman Jack Sears battled in the spring, but highly touted freshman JT Daniels shows up this summer to make things interesting. The winner gets to work with a strong receiving corps and versatile running back Stephen Carr.

Linebacker Cameron Smith was a first-team All-Pac-12 selection last year, as was safety Marvell Tell III. Both are first-rate talents, as is outside backer Porter Gustin, who gets after the QB well. There's talent here, but with questions at QB and on both lines, it's tough to imagine USC crashing the CFB Playoff party.

22. West Virginia

When it comes to pure entertainment, it's going to be difficult to beat the Mountaineers, who could well win or lose every game 42-40. The offense is potent, but if the defense doesn't tighten up, every game could be a four-hour shootout. Quarterback Will Grier, who threw for 3,490 yards and 34 TDs, is back, as is All-America wideout David Sills, part of what could be the best receiving corps in the Big 12. The running game needs to improve, but with Grier at full power, there will be holes in defenses petrified of getting burned through the air.

The biggest problem on last year's defense was the line, which could improve this year, particularly if four-star freshman defensive end Dante Stills can team with his brother, Darius, another end, to make the three-man front extra stout.

Peter Brouillet

23. Oregon

The Ducks head into 2018 at a crossroads, thanks to working under their third coach in three years. Mario Cristobal showed at FIU that he could build a winner, but Oregon doesn't have the same cachet it did even five years ago. It's up to Cristobal to build excitement among recruits by winning on the field, but he did pick up some wins during the offseason when he retained plenty of staff members, including defensive coordinator Jim Leavitt, who wants to turn the Ducks into a turnover-producing machine this season.

Cristobal also expects UO to be stronger late in games and the season, thanks to the "Fourth Quarter Conditioning Program" he learned about at Alabama.

It's good news that QB Justin Herbert is back, although he was limited by a shoulder injury last year. If healthy, he's a difference maker. Running back Tony Brooks-James is a home run hitter, while wideout Dillon Mitchell has big-play potential. The Ducks won't be challenged in the non-conference, play Stanford and Washington at home and don't have to face USC.

24. TCU

If you have a real appetite for Horned Frogs football and live in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, you are in for a real treat this season, because TCU leaves the region only four times — and two of those trips are to Austin and Waco. Coach Gary Patterson's Frogs must replace QB Kenny Hill, several wideouts and four-fifths of their offensive line. A passel of defensive playmakers are gone, too.

The personality on both sides of the ball has been altered as well. Offensive coordinator Sonny Cumbie made the Frogs more land-bound than they have been in a long time, which is good news for backs Darius Anderson and Sewo Olonilua. Sophomore Shawn Robinson is the top option at QB while five-star freshman Justin Rogers heals from a high school injury. Jalen Reagor and KaVontae Turpin headline a talented group of receivers.

On defense, lineman Ben Banogu and linebacker Ty Summers must emerge quickly, and the entire unit has to get back to forcing a bunch of turnovers if the Frogs want to win 11 games for the fourth time in five years.

25. Texas A&M

There was great rejoicing in Aggieland when Jimbo Fisher decided to leave Tallahassee for College Station. The Aggies have spent big on their stadium and facilities and have one of the nation's most committed administrations, so there is no reason why Fisher shouldn't be successful. Okay, maybe one: Alabama. And Auburn. LSU. Mississippi State. Fisher will need to recruit five-star players and coach 'em up to compete in the SEC West.

This season, he'll rely on mobile and accurate QB Nick Starkel, an O-line that returns all five starters, running back Trayveon Williams and a young receiving corps. Meanwhile, new coordinator Mike Elko will try to craft a defense capable of playing in the physical West. It's going to take a few recruiting cycles to get the talent level up, but Fisher should make an impact his first year.

RANKING THE REST

26. LSU
27. South Carolina
28. Utah
29. FAU
30. Missouri
31. UCF
32. Arizona
33. NC State
34. Oklahoma State
35. Iowa
36. Iowa State
37. Wake Forest
38. Memphis
39. Boston College
40. Louisville
41. Kansas State
42. Georgia Tech
43. Pitt
44. San Diego State
45. Purdue
46. Northwestern
47. Navy
48. Fresno State
49. California
50. UCLA
51. Maryland
52. Houston
53. Baylor
54. Texas Tech
55. Kentucky
56. Tennessee
57. Army
58. Ole Miss
59. Arkansas
60. Temple
61. USF
62. Nebraska
63. Indiana
64. Washington State
65. Duke
66. Syracuse
67. Colorado
68. Arizona State
69. North Carolina
70. Vanderbilt
71. Ohio
72. Arkansas State
73. Minnesota
74. Northern Illinois
75. Marshall
76. Troy
77. Appalachian State
78. North Texas
79. Louisiana Tech
80. Toledo
81. Virginia
82. Utah State
83. Wyoming
84. UAB
85. MTSU
86. BYU
87. Rutgers
88. Miami (Ohio)
89. Buffalo
90. Tulane
91. SMU
92. Southern Miss
93. Western Michigan
94. Akron
95. Illinois
96. Cincinnati
97. Colorado State
98. ULM
99. Nevada
100. UNLV
101. Air Force
102. Oregon State
103. Old Dominion
104. UTSA
105. Central Michigan
106. Eastern Michigan
107. UMass
108. Tulsa
109. FIU
110. Louisiana
111. WKU
112. South Alabama
113. Georgia State
114. New Mexico State
115. Georgia Southern
116. Kansas
117. UConn
118. New Mexico
119. Bowling Green
120. Ball State
121. Hawaii
122. East Carolina
123. Coastal Carolina
124. Liberty
125. San Jose State
126. Texas State
127. Charlotte
128. Rice
129. Kent State
130. UTEP

CONFERENCE PREDICTIONS

Records are projections for the 2018 season, overall and conference, through the regular season and conference championship games

ACC

ATLANTIC

1. Clemson (12-1, 7-1)
2. Florida State (9-3, 6-2)
3. NC State (8-4, 4-4)
4. Wake Forest (7-5, 4-4)
5. Boston College (6-6, 3-5)
6. Louisville (6-6, 3-5)
7. Syracuse (6-6, 3-5)

COASTAL

1. Miami (10-3, 6-2)
2. Virginia Tech (9-3, 5-3)
3. Georgia Tech (7-5, 4-4)
4. Pitt (6-6, 4-4)
5. Duke (6-6, 4-4)
6. North Carolina (4-8, 2-6)
7. Virginia (4-8, 1-7)

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Clemson over Miami

AMERICAN ATHLETIC

EAST

1. UCF (10-3, 7-1)
2. Temple (7-5, 5-3)
3. USF (8-4, 5-3)
4. Cincinnati (4-8, 3-5)
5. UConn (3-9, 1-7)
6. East Carolina (2-10, 1-7)

WEST

1. Memphis (9-4, 6-2)
2. Navy (9-4, 5-3)
3. Houston (7-5, 5-3)
4. Tulane (6-6, 4-4)
5. SMU (6-6, 4-4)
6. Tulsa (4-8, 2-6)

AAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

UCF over Memphis

BIG 12

1. Oklahoma (11-2, 7-2)
2. Texas (9-4, 6-3)
3. West Virginia (8-4, 6-3)
4. TCU (8-4, 6-3)
5. Oklahoma State 8-4, 5-4)
6. Iowa State (7-5, 5-4)
7. Kansas State (6-6, 4-5)
8. Baylor (6-6, 3-6)
9. Texas Tech (5-7, 3-6)
10. Kansas (2-10, 0-9)

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Oklahoma over Texas

BIG TEN

EAST

1. Ohio State (12-1, 8-1)
2. Michigan (10-2, 7-2)
3. Penn State (9-3, 6-3)
4. Michigan State (9-3, 6-3)
5. Maryland (6-6, 4-5)
6. Indiana (6-6, 3-6)
7. Rutgers (4-8, 1-8)

WEST

1. Wisconsin (10-3, 7-2)
2. Iowa (8-4, 5-4)
3. Purdue (7-5, 5-4)
4. Northwestern (6-6, 4-5)
5. Nebraska (6-6, 3-6)
6. Minnesota (6-6, 3-6)
7. Illinois (3-9, 1-8)

BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Ohio State over Wisconsin

CONFERENCE USA

EAST

1. FAU (11-2, 7-1)
2. Marshall (8-4, 6-2)
3. MTSU (7-5, 6-2)
4. Old Dominion (6-6, 3-5)
5. FIU (5-7, 3-5)
6. WKU (4-8, 2-6)
7. Charlotte (2-10, 1-7)

WEST

1. North Texas (8-5, 6-2)
2. Louisiana Tech (8-4, 6-2)
3. UAB (8-4, 6-2)
4. Southern Miss (7-5, 5-3)
5. UTSA (5-7, 4-4)
6. Rice (2-11, 1-7)
7. UTEP (1-11, 0-8)

C-USA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

FAU over North Texas

INDEPENDENTS

1. Notre Dame (9-3)
2. Army (8-4)
3. BYU (5-7)
4. UMass (5-7)
5. New Mexico State (5-7)
6. Liberty (3-9)

MAC

EAST

1. Ohio (10-3, 6-2)
2. Miami (6-6, 5-3)
3. Buffalo (7-5, 5-3)
4. Akron (5-7, 4-4)
5. Bowling Green (3-9, 2-6)
6. Kent State (1-11, 0-8)

WEST

1. Northern Illinois (7-6, 7-1)
2. Toledo (8-4, 6-2)
3. Western Michigan (6-6, 4-4)
4. Central Michigan (5-7, 4-4)
5. Eastern Michigan (4-8, 3-5)
6. Ball State (3-9, 2-6)

MAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Ohio over Northern Illinois

MOUNTAIN WEST

MOUNTAIN

1. Boise State (11-2, 7-1)
2. Utah State (8-4, 5-3)
3. Wyoming (7-5, 5-3)
4. Colorado State (6-6, 5-3)
5. Air Force (5-7, 4-4)
6. New Mexico (3-9, 1-7)

WEST

1. San Diego State (8-5, 6-2)
2. Fresno State (8-4, 6-2)
3. UNLV (6-6, 4-4)
4. Nevada (5-7, 4-4)
5. Hawaii (3-10, 1-7)
6. San Jose State (1-11, 0-8)

MW CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Boise State over San Diego State

PAC-12

NORTH

1. Washington (11-2, 8-1)
2. Stanford (8-4, 6-3)
3. Oregon (8-4, 5-4)
4. California (7-5, 4-5)
5. Washington State (6-6, 3-6)
6. Oregon State (2-10, 0-9)

SOUTH

1. USC (9-4, 7-2)
2. Utah (8-4, 5-4)
3. Arizona (8-4, 5-4)
4. UCLA (6-6, 4-5)
5. Colorado (6-6, 4-5)
6. Arizona State (5-7, 3-6)

PAC-12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Washington over USC

SEC

EAST

1. Georgia (12-1, 8-0)
2. Florida (8-4, 5-3)
3. South Carolina (7-5, 4-4)
4. Missouri (7-5, 3-5)
5. Kentucky (6-6, 3-5)
6. Tennessee (5-7, 2-6)
7. Vanderbilt (4-8, 1-7)

WEST

1. Alabama (13-0, 8-0)
2. Auburn (10-2, 6-2)
3. Mississippi State (9-3, 5-3)
4. Texas A&M (8-4, 5-3)
5. LSU (7-5, 4-4)
6. Ole Miss (5-7, 1-7)
7. Arkansas (5-7, 1-7)

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Alabama over Georgia

SUN BELT

EAST

1. Troy (8-5, 6-2)
2. Appalachian State (8-4, 5-3)
3. Georgia State (5-7, 4-4)
4. Georgia Southern (4-8, 3-5)
5. Coastal Carolina (3-9, 2-6)

WEST

1. Arkansas State (9-4, 6-2)
2. ULM (6-6, 5-3)
3. Louisiana (6-6, 4-4)
4. South Alabama (5-7, 4-4)
5. Texas State (3-9, 1-7)

SUN BELT CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Arkansas State over Troy

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 BOWL PROJECTIONS

ALAMO
Big 12 vs. Pac-12
West Virginia vs. USC

ARIZONA
Mountain West vs. Sun Belt
Colorado State vs. ULM

ARMED FORCES
American vs. Big 12
Houston vs. Kansas State

BAHAMAS
American vs. Conference USA
Memphis vs. FAU

BELK
ACC vs. SEC
Virginia Tech vs. Missouri

BIRMINGHAM
American vs. SEC
UCF vs. UCLA*

BOCA RATON
Conference USA vs. MAC
MTSU vs. Ohio

CACTUS
Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Iowa State vs. Utah

CAMELLIA
MAC vs. Sun Belt
Miami (Ohio) vs. Troy

CAMPING WORLD
ACC vs. Big 12
Florida State vs. Texas

CITRUS
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Michigan State vs. Mississippi State

CURE
American vs. Sun Belt
Temple vs. Appalachian State

DOLLAR GENERAL
MAC vs. Sun Belt
Northern Illinois vs. Arkansas State

FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO
MAC vs. Mountain West
Buffalo vs. Fresno State

FOSTER FARMS
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Northwestern vs. Oregon

FRISCO
American vs. MAC
Tulane vs. Toledo

GASPARILLA
American vs. TBD
USF vs. Army

HAWAII
Conference USA vs. Mountain West
Marshall vs. Utah State

HEART OF DALLAS
Big Ten vs. Conference USA
Minnesota vs. North Texas

HOLIDAY
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Iowa vs. Stanford

INDEPENDENCE
ACC vs. SEC
Georgia Tech vs. Louisiana Tech*

LAS VEGAS
Mountain West vs. Pac-12
San Diego State vs. California

LIBERTY
Big 12 vs. SEC
Oklahoma State vs. Kentucky

MILITARY
American vs. ACC
Navy vs. Boston College

MUSIC CITY
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Maryland vs. South Carolina

NEW MEXICO
Conference USA vs. Mountain West
Southern Miss vs. Wyoming

NEW ORLEANS
Conference USA vs. Sun Belt
UAB vs. Louisiana

OUTBACK
Big Ten vs. SEC
Purdue vs. Florida

PINSTRIPE
ACC vs. Big Ten
NC State vs. Nebraska

QUICK LANE
ACC vs. Big Ten
Wake Forest vs. Indiana

SUN
ACC vs. Pac-12
Louisville vs. Arizona

TAXSLAYER
ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Notre Dame vs. Texas A&M

TEXAS
Big 12 vs. SEC
TCU vs. LSU

New Year's Six

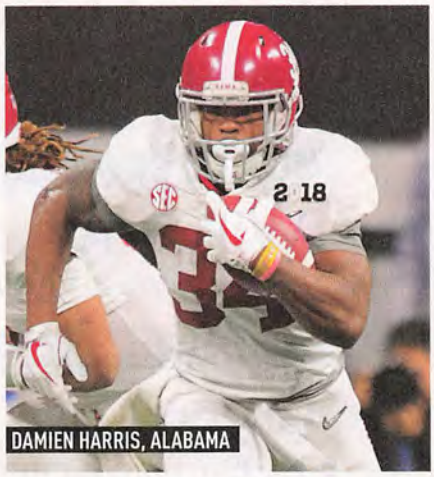
CHICK-FIL-A PEACH
At-Large vs. At-Large
Miami (Fla.) vs. Penn State

FIESTA
At-Large vs. At-Large
Boise State vs. Wisconsin

ROSE
Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Michigan vs. Washington

SUGAR
Big 12 vs. SEC
Oklahoma vs. Auburn

*According to our projections, the SEC will fail to fill its allotted slots.


DAMIEN HARRIS, ALABAMA

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

National Semifinal
ORANGE BOWL
CLEMSON VS. GEORGIA

National Semifinal
COTTON BOWL
ALABAMA VS. OHIO STATE

National Championship
Cotton Bowl winner vs. Orange Bowl winner
ALABAMA VS. CLEMSON


KELLY BRYANT, CLEMSON

ATHLON SPORTS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE



Bryce Love



Jonathan Taylor

QUARTERBACK
Will Grier
6-2, 215, Sr., West Virginia

RUNNING BACK
Bryce Love
5-10, 196, Sr., Stanford

RUNNING BACK
Jonathan Taylor
5-11, 216, So., Wisconsin

ALL-PURPOSE
Myles Gaskin
5-10, 191, Sr., Washington

WIDE RECEIVER
A.J. Brown
6-1, 225, Jr., Ole Miss

WIDE RECEIVER
David Sills
6-4, 204, Sr., West Virginia



Dalton Risner

TIGHT END
Noah Fant
6-5, 241, Jr., Iowa

CENTER
Ross Pierschbacher
6-4, 301, Sr., Alabama

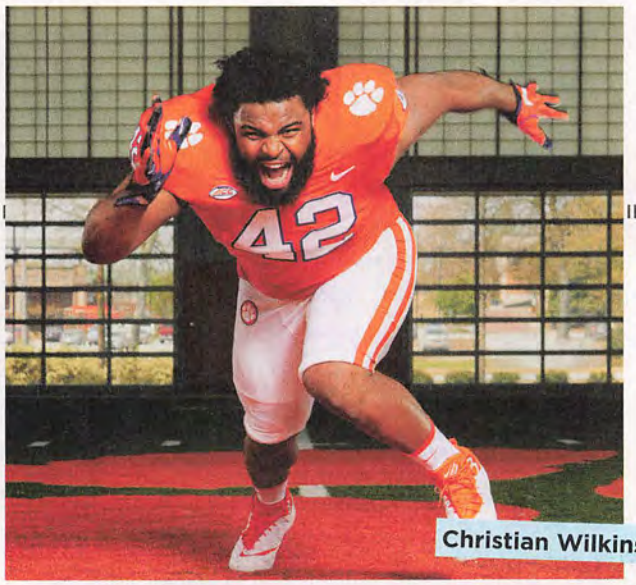
OFFENSIVE LINEMAN
David Edwards
6-7, 319, Jr., Wisconsin

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN
Mitch Hyatt
6-5, 305, Sr., Clemson

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN
Dalton Risner
6-5, 300, Sr., Kansas State

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN
Jonah Williams
6-5, 301, Jr., Alabama

Taylor: Tom Lynn; Love: Peter Brouillet; Risner: Tim Umphrey; Wilkins: Paul Abell


Christian Wilkins

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Nick Bosa

6-4, 263, Jr., Ohio State

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Clelin Ferrell

6-5, 260, Jr., Clemson

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Ed Oliver

6-3, 290, Jr., Houston

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Christian Wilkins

6-4, 300, Sr., Clemson

LINEBACKER

Troy Dye

6-4, 221, Jr., Oregon

LINEBACKER

Cameron Smith

6-2, 250, Sr., USC

LINEBACKER

Devin White

6-1, 240, Jr., LSU

CORNERBACK

Byron Murphy

5-11, 184, So., Washington

CORNERBACK

Greedy Williams

6-2, 182, So., LSU

SAFETY

Jaquan Johnson

5-11, 190, Sr., Miami (Fla.)

SAFETY

Taylor Rapp

6-0, 207, Jr., Washington

FIRST TEAM SPECIALISTS

KICKER

Matt Gay

6-0, 228, Sr., Utah

PUNTER

Mitch Wishnowsky

6-2, 220, Sr., Utah

KICK RETURNER

Tony Pollard

5-11, 200, Jr., Memphis

PUNT RETURNER

KaVontae Turpin

5-9, 153, Sr., TCU

ATHLON SPORTS

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

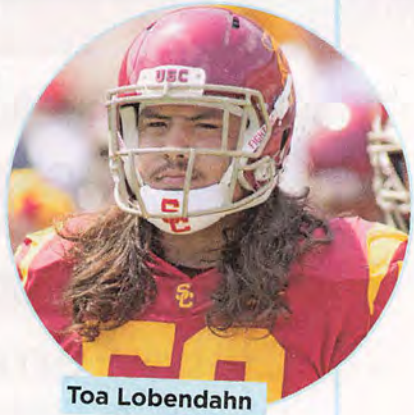
SECOND TEAM



D'Andre Swift

OFFENSE

QB	Tua Tagovailoa	6-1	218	So.	Alabama
RB	AJ Dillon	6-0	245	So.	Boston College
RB	Devin Singletary	5-9	200	Jr.	FAU
AP	D'Andre Swift	5-9	215	So.	Georgia
WR	N'Keal Harry	6-4	213	Jr.	Arizona State
WR	Deebo Samuel	6-0	210	Sr.	South Carolina
TE	Albert Okwuegbunam	6-5	260	So.	Missouri
C	Toa Lobendahn	6-3	290	Sr.	USC
OL	Trey Adams	6-8	327	Sr.	Washington
OL	Beau Benzschawel	6-6	322	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	Nate Herbig	6-4	348	Jr.	Stanford
OL	Greg Little	6-6	325	Jr.	Ole Miss



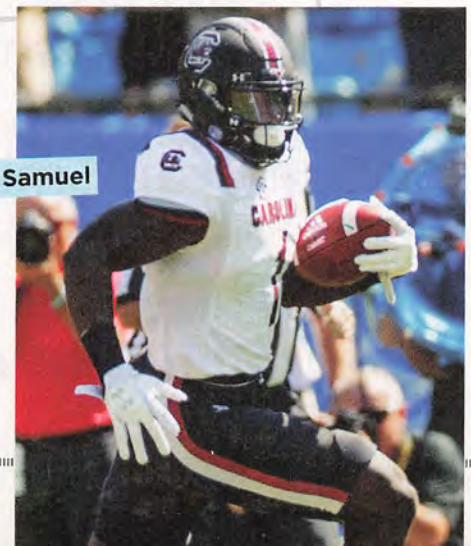
Toa Lobendahn



Jeffery Simmons

DEFENSE

DL	Rashan Gary	6-5	281	Jr.	Michigan
DL	Jeffery Simmons	6-4	300	Jr.	Mississippi State
DL	Sutton Smith	6-1	225	Jr.	Northern Illinois
DL	Chase Winovich	6-3	253	Sr.	Michigan
LB	Devin Bush	5-11	222	Jr.	Michigan
LB	T.J. Edwards	6-1	248	Sr.	Wisconsin
LB	Joe Giles-Harris	6-2	240	Jr.	Duke
CB	Deandre Baker	5-11	185	Sr.	Georgia
CB	Mark Gilbert	6-1	175	Jr.	Duke
S	D'Cota Dixon	5-10	200	Sr.	Wisconsin
S	Andrew Wingard	6-0	210	Sr.	Wyoming



Deebo Samuel

SPECIALISTS

K	Dominik Eberle	6-2	190	Jr.	Utah State
P	Jake Bailey	6-2	188	Sr.	Stanford
KR	Deebo Samuel	6-0	210	Sr.	South Carolina
PR	Mecole Hardman	5-11	183	Jr.	Georgia

Swift, Blankenship: Paul Abell; ; Bachie: Tom Lynn; Simmons, Samuel: Tom DiPace; Davis: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Dobbins: Ohio State Athletics; Lobendahn: Peter Brouillet

THIRD TEAM


J.K. Dobbins

OFFENSE

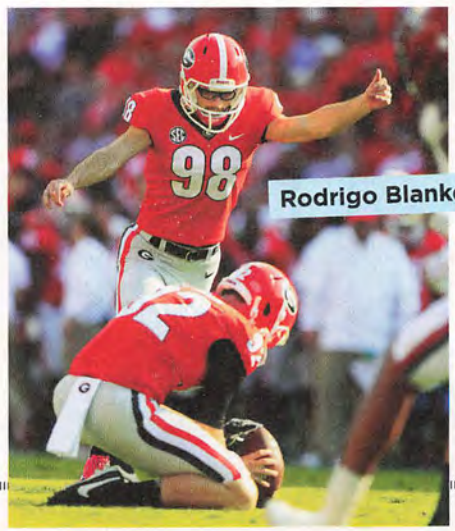
QB	Khalil Tate	6-2	215	Jr.	Arizona
RB	J.K. Dobbins	5-10	212	So.	Ohio State
RB	Damien Harris	5-11	213	Sr.	Alabama
AP	Justice Hill	5-10	190	Jr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Penny Hart	5-8	180	Jr.	Georgia State
WR	Anthony Johnson	6-2	207	Sr.	Buffalo
TE	Kaden Smith	6-5	253	So.	Stanford
C	Jake Hanson	6-5	298	Jr.	Oregon
OL	Michael Deiter	6-6	321	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	Bobby Evans	6-5	299	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Trey Smith	6-6	320	So.	Tennessee
OL	Andrew Thomas	6-5	320	So.	Georgia


Raekwon Davis

DEFENSE

DL	Raekwon Davis	6-7	308	Jr.	Alabama
DL	Dexter Lawrence	6-4	340	Jr.	Clemson
DL	Montez Sweat	6-6	245	Sr.	Mississippi State
DL	Ricky Walker	6-2	304	Sr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Joe Bachie	6-2	230	Jr.	Michigan State
LB	Khaleke Hudson	6-0	205	Jr.	Michigan
LB	Shaq Quarterman	6-1	240	Jr.	Miami
CB	Julian Love	5-11	189	Jr.	Notre Dame
CB	Brian Peavy	5-9	190	Sr.	Iowa State
S	Lukas Denis	5-11	185	Sr.	Boston College
S	Jordan Fuller	6-2	204	Jr.	Ohio State


Joe Bachie


Rodrigo Blankenship

SPECIALISTS

K	Rodrigo Blankenship	6-1	191	Jr.	Georgia
P	Corliss Waitman	6-2	205	Sr.	South Alabama
KR	Marcus Jones	5-9	170	So.	Troy
PR	Avery Williams	5-9	193	So.	Boise State

THE 18TH ANNUAL ATHLON SPORTS UNIT RANKINGS



KELVIN HARMON

ACC

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
BOSTON COLLEGE	13	2	12	1	5	6	5
CLEMSON	1	3	2	2	1	2	1
DUKE	7	10	9	14	10	3	11
FLORIDA STATE	4	1	5	4	4	7	2
GEORGIA TECH	8	5	14	10	13	8	13
LOUISVILLE	10	12	4	7	8	9	10
MIAMI	5	4	3	8	3	1	3
NORTH CAROLINA	12	6	7	12	9	12	12
NC STATE	2	8	1	3	7	11	9
PITTSBURGH	9	7	13	11	6	4	7
SYRACUSE	6	14	11	9	12	14	14
VIRGINIA	14	13	10	13	14	5	6
VIRGINIA TECH	3	11	8	6	2	10	4
WAKE FOREST	11	9	6	5	11	13	8

AMERICAN

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CINCINNATI	8	8	11	11	6	7	11
CONNECTICUT	11	11	8	12	11	11	9
EAST CAROLINA	12	12	7	10	10	12	12
HOUSTON	4	10	9	6	1	4	3
MEMPHIS	7	1	2	1	5	3	4
NAVY	2	9	12	5	4	9	8
SMU	5	2	10	9	9	6	7
TEMPLE	6	4	4	7	3	1	5
TULANE	3	6	6	8	8	10	6
TULSA	10	5	5	4	12	8	10
UCF	1	3	1	2	7	2	1
USF	9	7	3	3	2	5	2



ED OLIVER



GARY JENNINGS

BIG 12

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
BAYLOR	2	8	3	9	8	9	8
IOWA STATE	3	3	6	6	5	2	4
KANSAS	10	10	9	10	10	8	10
KANSAS STATE	6	6	10	1	6	10	2
OKLAHOMA	4	1	2	2	4	3	6
OKLAHOMA STATE	8	2	4	7	3	7	5
TCU	7	4	5	8	2	6	3
TEXAS	5	7	7	5	1	1	1
TEXAS TECH	9	9	8	4	7	4	7
WEST VIRGINIA	1	5	1	3	9	6	9

Harmon: Chris Keane; Oliver: Getty Images; Jennings: Bruce Schwartzman; Benzschawel: Tom Lynn; Singletary: FAU Athletics; Johnson: The University of Toledo

BIG TEN

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ILLINOIS	14	14	10	14	14	12	14
INDIANA	10	13	7	13	12	14	11
IOWA	4	11	8	6	6	13	6
MARYLAND	9	5	9	7	9	10	9
MICHIGAN	6	3	5	10	2	1	1
MICHIGAN STATE	2	4	3	4	5	3	3
MINNESOTA	12	9	13	11	11	8	8
NEBRASKA	11	8	6	5	8	9	12
NORTHWESTERN	8	10	11	8	4	4	7
OHIO STATE	5	2	1	2	1	5	2
PENN STATE	1	6	4	3	3	6	4
PURDUE	7	7	12	9	13	11	13
RUTGERS	13	12	14	12	10	7	10
WISCONSIN	3	1	2	1	7	2	5



BEAU BENZSCHAWEL



DEVIN SINGLETARY

CONFERENCE USA

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CHARLOTTE	10	12	13	10	13	10	13
FLORIDA ATLANTIC	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
FIU	9	6	9	7	8	6	12
LOUISIANA TECH	3	10	4	3	3	11	5
MARSHALL	7	4	3	2	2	2	2
MIDDLE TENNESSEE	2	7	7	6	5	3	6
NORTH TEXAS	1	5	2	9	9	7	8
OLD DOMINION	8	3	6	8	6	9	10
RICE	14	13	14	14	11	14	14
SOUTHERN MISS	6	8	10	5	10	4	11
UAB	4	2	5	4	7	8	3
UTEP	13	14	12	11	14	13	9
UTSA	12	9	11	13	4	5	7
WKU	11	11	8	12	12	12	4

MID-AMERICAN

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
AKRON	5	11	10	10	9	4	7
BALL STATE	8	2	6	11	12	10	12
BOWLING GREEN	7	10	4	9	10	8	10
BUFFALO	3	7	2	6	5	2	9
CENTRAL MICHIGAN	11	4	11	8	3	3	6
EASTERN MICHIGAN	10	8	9	5	2	11	5
KENT STATE	12	12	12	12	11	9	11
MIAMI	2	5	8	3	4	1	4
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	4	9	7	2	1	5	1
OHIO	1	1	3	1	6	6	3
TOLEDO	9	2	1	7	7	7	2
WESTERN MICHIGAN	6	3	5	4	8	12	8



DIONTAE JOHNSON


TYLER HORTON

MOUNTAIN WEST

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
AIR FORCE	6	10	11	10	8	12	7
BOISE STATE	1	2	3	2	1	4	1
COLORADO STATE	8	4	7	6	7	7	6
FRESNO STATE	3	6	1	4	5	1	2
HAWAII	12	12	9	11	11	6	11
NEVADA	2	5	2	8	9	8	10
NEW MEXICO	9	8	10	9	6	10	8
SAN DIEGO STATE	5	3	12	1	3	3	4
SAN JOSE STATE	11	7	4	12	12	11	12
UNLV	4	1	5	7	10	9	9
UTAH STATE	7	9	8	5	4	5	5
WYOMING	10	11	6	3	2	2	3

PAC-12

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ARIZONA	1	6	6	6	8	5	6
ARIZONA STATE	5	9	1	8	5	9	11
CALIFORNIA	9	7	2	7	9	10	10
COLORADO	8	11	9	12	11	11	9
OREGON	3	5	8	4	3	2	7
OREGON STATE	12	12	12	10	12	12	12
STANFORD	6	1	4	1	7	4	8
UCLA	10	8	10	11	10	8	4
USC	7	4	3	3	2	1	3
UTAH	4	3	11	5	4	6	2
WASHINGTON	2	2	7	2	1	3	1
WASHINGTON STATE	11	10	5	9	6	7	5


KHALIL TATE


A.J. BROWN

SEC

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ALABAMA	1	1	3	1	2	1	5
ARKANSAS	12	7	8	12	11	7	9
AUBURN	3	8	6	10	1	2	4
FLORIDA	13	5	7	7	4	8	1
GEORGIA	5	2	5	2	5	4	2
KENTUCKY	14	6	13	8	12	6	8
LSU	11	12	11	6	6	5	3
MISSOURI	2	4	4	3	8	11	13
MISS. STATE	4	3	12	4	3	12	6
OLE MISS	8	14	1	5	13	14	12
SOUTH CAROLINA	6	10	2	9	9	9	10
TENNESSEE	10	11	9	13	10	10	11
TEXAS A&M	9	9	10	11	7	3	7
VANDERBILT	7	13	14	14	14	13	14

SUN BELT

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
APPALACHIAN STATE	5	1	5	3	3	3	1
ARKANSAS STATE	1	3	3	4	1	7	4
COASTAL CAROLINA	10	7	8	9	8	9	8
GEORGIA STATE	7	10	2	7	4	2	6
GEORGIA SOUTHERN	6	6	10	5	6	8	5
LOUISIANA	4	2	6	6	7	10	9
SOUTH ALABAMA	8	8	7	8	5	4	3
TEXAS STATE	9	9	9	10	10	5	10
TROY	3	4	4	1	2	1	2
ULM	2	5	1	2	9	6	7


JALIN MOORE

Horton: AP; Tate: Peter Brouillet; Brown, Harris: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Moore: Allyson Lamb/App State Athletics

NATIONAL UNIT RANKINGS

QUARTERBACKS	RUNNING BACKS	RECEIVERS
1. Alabama	**1. Alabama**	1. Ole Miss
2. Clemson	2. Wisconsin	2. West Virginia
3. West Virginia	3. Stanford	3. Oklahoma
4. Penn State	4. Ohio State	4. South Carolina
5. Arizona	5. Georgia	5. Alabama
6. UCF	6. Florida State	6. NC State
7. Washington	7. Oklahoma	7. Clemson
8. Missouri	8. Washington	8. Toledo
9. Auburn	9. Boston College	9. Ohio State
10. Mississippi State	10. FAU	10. Missouri



DAMIEN HARRIS

OFFENSIVE LINE	DEFENSIVE LINE	LINEBACKERS	DEFENSIVE BACKS
1. Wisconsin	1. Clemson	1. Alabama	1. Washington
2. Alabama	2. Ohio State	2. Michigan	2. Michigan
3. Georgia	3. Michigan	3. Miami	3. Florida
4. Stanford	4. Auburn	4. Wisconsin	4. Clemson
5. Washington	5. Alabama	5. USC	5. Ohio State
6. Missouri	6. Mississippi State	6. Auburn	6. Georgia
7. Boston College	7. Florida	7. Michigan State	7. Florida State
8. Mississippi State	8. Virginia Tech	8. Notre Dame	8. LSU
9. Ole Miss	9. Miami	9. Clemson	9. Texas
10. Kansas State	10. Georgia	10. Texas A&M	10. Boise State

Alabama Jalen Hurts' résumé is sparkling: A 26–2 record as the starter, including two appearances in the National Championship Game. That, however, doesn't guarantee anything, and it's likely that he will relinquish the job to sophomore **Tua Tagovailoa**. The hero of Alabama's comeback win over Georgia in the title game, Tagovailoa is one of the most physically gifted quarterbacks in the nation. The Hawaii native showcased his arm strength and accuracy by connecting on 63.6 percent of his throws for 636 yards and 11 scores in a reserve role last fall. Tagovailoa's ability to stretch the field and open up the passing game is too valuable to have on the sidelines.
Projected Winner: Tagovailoa





EXTRA POINTS

QB BATTLES

Clemson In his first season as the starter, **Kelly Bryant** threw for 2,802 yards and 13 touchdowns and finished third on the team with 665 rushing yards and 11 scores. Bryant's average of 247.6 total yards per game ranked seventh in the ACC, but Clemson's passing attack took a step back from the Deshaun Watson-led 2016 offense. Sophomore Hunter Johnson and Trevor Lawrence, the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2018 signing class, will challenge Bryant for snaps. Bryant is the best runner out of the trio, but Lawrence and Johnson are better passers. Lawrence, who enrolled in the spring, has the most all-around upside of the three.
Projected Winner: Bryant



Florida Fixing an anemic offense that averaged only 22.1 points per game last season is the top priority for new coach Dan Mullen. There is talent at the skill positions, and the offensive line is in relatively good shape, but the quarterback position features significant question marks. **Feleipe Franks** completed just 54.6 percent of his throws as a redshirt freshman last fall. However, he's getting a second chance under the new coaching staff and responded well in the spring. Kyle Trask and Jake Allen are also in the mix, but true freshman Emory Jones is the long-term answer at this position. Jones ranked as one of the top dual-threat QBs in the 2018 class and participated in the spring.
Projected Winner: Franks

Florida State Deondre Francois was poised to claim a spot among the ACC's top quarterbacks in 2017, but a season-ending knee injury against Alabama in the opener derailed Florida State's offense. True freshman James Blackman assumed the starting job and threw for 2,230 yards and 19 TDs. Francois was limited in the spring, and that allowed Blackman and redshirt freshman Bailey Hockman to get an early edge in new coach Willie Taggart's offense. After a full year to work as the starter and an offseason to add bulk, Blackman likely has a slight advantage over Francois.
Projected Winner: Blackman

Georgia Jake Fromm was pressed into duty as a true freshman when Jacob Eason suffered a knee injury early in the opener against Appalachian State. The former five-star recruit was never overwhelmed by the moment, guiding Georgia to an SEC title and an appearance in the National Championship Game. Fromm also ranked among the SEC's top quarterbacks, throwing for 2,615 yards and 24 scores in 15 appearances. However, he's far from secure as the No. 1. Justin Fields, also a five-star recruit, is the only other scholarship quarterback on the roster and brings a dual-threat element to the offense. He's too talented to not see action at some point.
Projected Winner: Fromm

LSU The task of fixing LSU's passing attack falls to new coordinator Steve Ensminger, who is likely to use more three- and four-receiver looks to spread the field. But in order for that plan to work, Ensminger and coach Ed Orgeron have to find a QB. Myles Brennan connected on 14-of-24 attempts for 182 yards in limited duty as a true freshman in 2017 and is the frontrunner over redshirt freshman Lowell Narcisse and junior Justin McMillan. Narcisse and McMillan are better runners, and Ensminger could create a package to get them on the field.
Projected Winner: Brennan

Franks: Tom DiPace; Tagovailoa, Bryant: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Wimbush: Tom Lynn; Ehlinger: Chris Covatta

Michigan Jim Harbaugh's fourth spring practice in Ann Arbor concluded with uncertainty at quarterback. That's largely due to the pending appeal of Ole Miss transfer Shea Patterson for immediate eligibility. If eligible, Patterson is the unquestioned starter. The former five-star recruit started 10 games in his tenure with the Rebels and threw for 3,139 yards and 23 touchdowns. If Patterson isn't eligible, Michigan can turn to third-year sophomore Brandon Peters, redshirt freshman Dylan McCaffrey or true freshman Joe Milton. Peters showed some potential in six appearances last year but completed only 52.8 percent of his throws. McCaffrey was a four-star recruit in the 2017 signing class.
Projected Winner: Patterson

Nebraska It's likely to be only a matter of time before new Nebraska coach Scott Frost transforms the Cornhuskers into one of the Big Ten's top offenses. He heads into his 2018 debut in Lincoln with three players locked in a tight competition for the No. 1 spot. Tanner Lee departed early for the NFL and Patrick O'Brien transferred, leaving redshirt freshman Tristan Gebbia, true freshman Adrian Martinez and walk-on Andrew Bunch to compete for the starting job. Gebbia was recruited by the previous staff to run a pro-style attack, but he does have some mobility. After missing his senior year of high school due to injury, Martinez enrolled in time to compete in spring practice. The California native's dual-threat ability is the best fit for Frost's offense, but he might not be ready to play just yet.
Projected Winner: Gebbia



Notre Dame Most fans expected **Brandon Wimbush** to have a breakout season, but that didn't happen, and coach Brian Kelly opened the quarterback competition during the offseason. Ian Book closed out last season on a high note by throwing for 164 yards and two scores in the bowl win against LSU. He's firmly in the mix, with true freshman Phil Jurkovec also expected to get an extended look in the fall. Regardless of who starts, Kelly is looking for more from a passing attack that averaged only 178.9 yards per game in 2017.
Projected Winner: Wimbush

Ohio State Even though the J.T. Barrett-led Ohio State offense had its share of inconsistencies over the last few seasons, the Buckeyes are still going to miss Barrett's all-around play and leadership. But as always in Columbus, the cupboard is hardly bare for coach Urban Meyer. Sophomore Dwayne Haskins impressed in limited action last year, throwing for 565 yards and four scores, including a clutch performance in the second half to hold off Michigan after an injury to Barrett. Haskins isn't as mobile as Barrett but brings more to the offense as a passer. Joe Burrow has also played well in limited snaps and worked as Barrett's top backup in 2016. Former top recruit Tate Martell is also in the mix after a redshirt year. Burrow could leave as a graduate transfer if he does not win the job.
Projected Winner: Haskins

Tennessee Tennessee's offense averaged only 14.1 points in SEC games due in large part to poor quarterback play. New coach Jeremy Pruitt and coordinator Tyson Helton added Stanford graduate transfer Keller Chryst to compete with sophomores Jarrett Guarantano and Will McBride. Guarantano was underwhelming as a redshirt freshman. Chryst, a former four-star recruit, threw for 962 yards and eight TDs in seven games with the Cardinal last year. He is a better fit for the new offense in Knoxville.
Projected Winner: Chryst



Texas Texas enters the 2018 season with its best outlook at quarterback since Colt McCoy departed Austin following the 2009 season. Shane Buechele and **Sam Ehlinger** have both had their moments as starters and combined for 3,320 passing yards and 18 TDs last season. Buechele has started 19 games over the last two seasons, while Ehlinger emerged as the team's best QB as a true freshman last year. Both are likely to see time, but Ehlinger's mobility and playmaking should give him an edge.
Projected Winner: Ehlinger

UCLA There will be some growing pains, but Chip Kelly has intriguing options at QB in his first year back in the Pac-12. Sophomore Devon Modster played in five games (two starts) last fall, throwing for 671 yards and four scores. He rushed for only 34 yards in the entire season but showed his mobility in high school (almost 700 yards rushing as a junior). Freshman Dorian Thompson-Robinson, considered to be an ideal fit for Kelly's offense, and Michigan transfer Wilton Speight are set to join the competition in the summer.
Projected Winner: Modster

USC Coach Clay Helton doesn't lack for options to replace Sam Darnold, but there's little in the way of experience. Sophomore Matt Fink might have an edge since he's the only QB on the roster who has taken a snap, but redshirt freshman Jack Sears and true freshman JT Daniels both will have a chance to win the job. Daniels ranked as one of the top quarterback recruits in the 2018 signing class and enrolled at USC in time for spring practice.
Projected Winner: Daniels

OTHERS TO WATCH
and projected starters

Arkansas: Cole Kelley
California: Ross Bowers
Kansas State: Skylar Thompson
Memphis: David Moore
Miami: Malik Rosier
Oklahoma State: Dru Brown
Purdue: David Blough
Texas A&M: Nick Starkel
Texas Tech: McLane Carter
USF: Chris Oladokun
Washington State: Gardner Minshew



1. SEC

The SEC is facing some stiff competition — mainly from the Big Ten — for its spot as the No. 1 conference in the nation. We all know that Alabama, Georgia and Auburn are in great shape for the immediate future; for the league to maintain its elite status going forward, programs such as LSU, Florida, Tennessee and Texas A&M must reach their potential in the next few years. In 2018, Georgia looks like the overwhelming pick in the East, though don't be surprised if Florida — rejuvenated under first-year coach Dan Mullen — or South Carolina mounts a legitimate challenge. In the West, it's Alabama and Auburn followed by Mississippi State. *Favorite: Alabama*

2. Big Ten The Big Ten East has replaced the SEC West as the most challenging division in college football. Over the last three seasons, the East has placed seven teams (Ohio State three times, Penn State twice, Michigan and Michigan State once) in the final AP top 10; in the same span, five SEC West teams (Alabama three times, Auburn and Ole Miss once) finished in the top 10. Wisconsin retains its spot as the top team in the West, but Nebraska — with Scott Frost running the show — will emerge as an annual contender in the very near future. Iowa, as usual, will be solid, and both Purdue and Minnesota are on the uptick with bright young coaches. *Favorite: Ohio State*

3. ACC Clemson will be a consensus pick to win the ACC in 2018. But this league features quality depth. Miami and Virginia Tech are both trending up under their respective third-year coaches, and Florida State will no doubt bounce back quickly from its uncharacteristic mediocre season now that Willie Taggart is in charge. The key question for the ACC: Can the middle part of the league (teams such as Louisville, NC State, Georgia Tech, etc.) emerge as top-25 caliber teams as opposed to top-40-ish teams? *Favorite: Clemson*

4. Big 12 The Big 12 might lack a true national championship contender in 2018, but no league figures to have more parity. Oklahoma is the easy pick for No. 1 again despite suffering key personnel losses. Texas gets the nod at No. 2 thanks to solid quarterback play and what should be the league's best defense. Pencil Kansas in at No. 10. Other than that, it's wide open, especially with teams 3 through 7. We settled on West Virginia, TCU, Oklahoma State, Iowa State and Kansas State as our predicted order, but you can make an argument for any of those teams to finish third. *Favorite: Oklahoma*

5. Pac-12 The Pac-12 is a bit of a mystery thanks to some extreme coaching turnover; six of the 12 teams will be under new leadership. Washington has the best coach in the league (Chris Petersen) and should have the best team. Stanford and Oregon are next in line in the North. USC is the pick in the South, though Utah poses a serious challenge. UCLA made one of the top hires of the offseason, but it might take Chip Kelly a few years to get the Bruins in position to win a championship. *Favorite: Washington*

6. AAC The AAC had one team win a New Year's Six Bowl (UCF) and two others finish the season ranked in the top 25 (South Florida and Memphis). UCF lost its coach — Scott Frost returned home to Nebraska — but should still be among the top Group of 5 teams in the country. South Florida and Temple will be worthy competitors in the East. The West is wide open; Memphis, Navy and Houston appear to be the top three. *Favorite: UCF*

7. Mountain West Fresno State's resurgence under Jeff Tedford has been a positive development, but the Mountain West still lags behind the AAC for the unofficial title as the top Group of 5 league. *Favorite: Boise State*

8. MAC The power still resides in the MAC West, where Northern Illinois and Toledo figure to fight it out for the division title. Ohio and Miami appear to be the top two teams in the East, but don't count out upstart Buffalo. *Favorite: Ohio*

9. Conference USA FAU made a huge leap in Lane Kiffin's first season, racing through the C-USA slate with an 8–0 mark and dominating North Texas in the league title game. Expect more of the same. *Favorite: FAU*

10. Sun Belt The Sun Belt will now have two five-team divisions after the departure of New Mexico State and Idaho. Tory and Appalachian State are the class of the East. Arkansas State is the pick in the West. *Favorite: Arkansas State.*

SEC:, Tagovailoa: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Taylor: Tom LynnMcSorley: Bruce Schwartzman

Heisman Trophy Contenders



1. Tua Tagovailoa, QB, Alabama
No player who has yet to start a game has received such offseason buzz as Tagovailoa — not even Tim Tebow in 2007. Alabama's dual-threat sophomore quarterback teased us with his play as reserve in garbage time throughout the 2017 regular season before starting the second half of the National Championship Game and leading Alabama to a comeback win over Georgia. If he maintains that level of play — assuming he wins the starting job, of course — the native of Hawaii will find himself in New York in December.

2. Bryce Love, RB, Stanford
There have been 30 players in Division I history to rush for at least 2,000 yards in a season. None did it more efficiently than Love, who averaged 8.1 yards per carry in his breakout junior season. His numbers could have even been gaudier had he not been slowed by an ankle injury in the latter half of the season.



3. Jonathan Taylor, RB, Wisconsin
Taylor burst onto the scene in Week 2 of his true freshman season by rushing for 223 yards in a 31–14 win over Florida Atlantic. He topped the 200-yard mark two more times and ended his first season with 1,977 yards on a 6.6-yard average. He will be the offensive star for a preseason top-10 team.

4. J.K. Dobbins, RB, Ohio State
Dobbins rushed for 1,403 yards as a true freshman despite getting more than 20 carries only one time (in Week 1). His 7.2-yard average trailed only Bryce Love and Rashaad Penny among players with at least 175 rushing attempts. Dobbins' biggest obstacle: He will face more competition for carries than most of the backs on this list.

5. Khalil Tate, QB, Arizona
Tate's numbers were obscene after taking over as the Wildcats' quarterback in Week 5. Consider the following: In his first six games, he averaged 201.2 rushing yards per game while averaging 10.0 yards per passing attempt. That's an unreal combination of rushing production and passing efficiency. Tate should thrive under new coach Kevin Sumlin.

6. Jake Fromm, QB, Georgia
Used primarily as a "game manager" early in his true freshman season, Fromm took on a larger role in the offense down the stretch. He was nearly flawless in wins over Auburn (SEC Championship Game) and Oklahoma (CFB Playoff Semifinal) and also played well in the title game loss to Alabama.

7. Will Grier, QB, West Virginia
Grier thrived under Dana Holgorsen in his first season at West Virginia, throwing for 3,490 yards with 34 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. If the Mountaineers emerge as contenders in the Big 12 — which is quite possible — he could emerge as a legitimate Heisman contender.



8. Trace McSorley, QB, Penn State
The case against McSorley: Penn State lost offensive coordinator Joe Moorhead, its top rusher (Saquon Barkley) and its top pass catcher (DaeSean Hamilton). The case for McSorley: He will need to become an even bigger part of the Nittany Lions' attack and could post the best numbers of his three years as the starter.

9. Jarrett Stidham, QB, Auburn
Stidham is poised to have a big junior season as the Tigers could skew more to the passing game thanks to the departure of Kerryon Johnson (1,391 rushing yards) and the return of their top six pass catchers.

10. Rodney Anderson, RB, Oklahoma
Slowed by injuries during his first two years at Oklahoma, Anderson averaged 134.9 rushing yards over the last eight games — highlighted by a career-high 201 against Georgia in the College Football Playoff loss.

OTHERS TO WATCH

11. Jake Browning, QB, Washington
12. Drew Lock, QB, Missouri
13. Ed Oliver, DT, Houston
14. Brian Lewerke, QB, Michigan State
15. AJ Dillon, RB, Boston College
16. Cam Akers, RB, Florida State
17. McKenzie Milton, QB, UCF
18. Justin Herbert, QB, Oregon
19. DeAndre Swift, RB, Georgia
20. Nick Fitzgerald, QB, Mississippi State

Ranking 2017's New Coaches



1. Jeff Tedford, Fresno State

Before: 1-11 (0-8) After: 10-4 (7-1)

Tedford did a masterful job in his return to the head-coaching ranks, leading his alma mater to the West Division title of the Mountain West Conference one year after the program went winless in league play. The Bulldogs recorded wins over San Diego State, Boise State and Houston, and three of their four losses came to teams ranked in the final AP Top 25 (Alabama, Washington and Boise State).

2. Lane Kiffin, FAU

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 11-3 (8-0)

The Kiffin era got off to a rocky start — FAU lost to Navy (by 23 points) and Buffalo in the first four weeks of the season — but the Owls dominated their Conference USA schedule and ended the year on a 10-game winning streak. FAU increased its offensive production by 100.1 yards and 14.2 points per game from 2016 to '17.

3. Lincoln Riley, Oklahoma

Before: 11-2 (9-0) After: 12-2 (8-1)

Riley was handed the keys to the Oklahoma program last summer at the age of 33 and guided the Sooners to a Big 12 title and the No. 2 seed in the College Football Playoff. The OU offense led the nation with 579.6 yards per game and 8.3 yards per play and ranked third nationally in scoring with 45.1 points per game.



4. Jeff Brohm, Purdue

Before: 3-9 (1-8)
After: 7-6 (4-5)

Brohm is known as one of the top offensive coaches in the game, but it was the Purdue defense that was the catalyst to the program's first bowl game since 2012. The Boilermakers improved their scoring margin from negative-13.7 to plus-4.7 per game thanks to a defense that allowed an average of 20.5 points (down from 38.3 in 2016). Another positive sign: Five of Purdue's six losses came by 10 points or fewer.

5. Butch Davis, FIU

Before: 4-8 (4-4) After: 8-5 (5-3)

Lane Kiffin stole the headlines at nearby FAU, but Davis engineered a nice turnaround of his own in South Florida in his return to the sidelines. The Panthers improved their win total by four games and had a winning record in league play for the first time since going 5-3 in the Sun Belt in 2011.

6. Shawn Elliott, Georgia State

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 7-5 (5-3)

Georgia State opened the season with two losses — at home to FCS member Tennessee State and at Penn State by 56 points. The Panthers proceeded to win seven of their final 10 games, including all five on the road, to finish with a winning record for the first time in the program's five seasons in the FBS ranks. There are, however, holes in the résumé: Georgia State did not beat a team with a winning record and won only one game by more than 10 points.

7. Willie Taggart, Oregon

Before: 4-8 (2-7) After: 7-6 (4-5)

Taggart restored order in his only season in Eugene, leading the Ducks back to a bowl game after a one-year hiatus. Things could have been even better had quarterback Justin Herbert remained healthy; Oregon went 6-1 in the regular season in his seven starts and 1-4 when he was sidelined with a fractured collarbone.

8. Geoff Collins, Temple

Before: 10-4 (7-1) After: 7-6 (4-4)

The record doesn't look overly impressive, but Collins did a nice job in his first season as a head coach. Temple lost key personnel on both sides of the ball from a team that won 10 games and captured the AAC Championship. The Owls won three of their last four to reach bowl-eligibility and capped off the season with a 28-3 win over FIU in the Gasparilla Bowl.

9. Charlie Strong, USF

Before: 11-2 (7-1) After: 10-2 (6-2)

South Florida entered 2017 as the overwhelming pick to be the top Group of 5 team in the nation. Didn't happen. The Bulls still had a fine season — winning 10 games — but failed to win the AAC East Division (losing out to rival UCF). The offense took a step back (from great to very good), averaging 1.0 yard per play fewer in 2017.

Tedford: Fresno State Athletics; Brohm: Tim Umphrey; Herman: Layne Murdoch; Sanford: Drew Fritz

Ranking 2017's New Coaches



10. Tom Herman, Texas

Before: 5-7 (3-6) After: 7-6 (5-4)

A solid first season for Herman could have been even better with a few breaks. The Longhorns lost to both USC and Oklahoma State in overtime and lost to Oklahoma and Texas Tech by a combined nine points. The biggest area of improvement was on defense; Texas allowed 365.6 yards per game in 2017, down from 448.3 in Charlie Strong's final season.

11. Matt Luke, Ole Miss

Before: 5-7 (2-6) After: 6-6 (3-5)

Luke did an outstanding job in his season as the Rebels' interim head coach, coaxing six wins out of a team that was banned from the postseason. He was named the permanent head coach three days after leading the Rebels to a 31-28 win over Mississippi State in Starkville.

12. Ed Orgeron, LSU

Before: 8-4 (5-3) After: 9-4 (6-2)

LSU's 2017 season will always be remembered for the loss at home to Troy, but the Tigers managed to win nine games and went 6-2 in the SEC, their best mark since 2012. This program continues to have issues on offense, however, and the Matt Canada experiment lasted only one season. Steve Ensminger will call the plays this year — much to the dismay of the Tiger faithful.

13. Justin Wilcox, California

Before: 5-7 (3-6) After: 5-7 (2-7)

The Golden Bears won one fewer Pac-12 game in 2017 but were arguably a better team despite losing standout quarterback Davis Webb and three starters on the offensive line. Cal dominated Washington State 37-3 in mid-October for one of its two league wins. Among its losses were a one-point setback to Arizona and three-point defeats at Stanford and UCLA.

14. Major Applewhite, Houston

Before: 9-4 (5-3) After: 7-5 (5-3)

After a two-year stint as Tom Herman's offensive coordinator, Applewhite was named head coach at arguably the most desirable Group of 5 program in the nation. The results were underwhelming. After a 4-1 start, Houston lost four of its last seven to finish 7-5. Not exactly what UH president Renu Khator had in mind when she said: "The winning is defined at the University of Houston as 10-2. We fire coaches at 8-4."

15. Tom Allen, Indiana

Before: 6-7 (4-5) After: 5-7 (2-7)

Indiana had its moments in 2017 — a surprisingly easy win at Virginia, close losses to Michigan and Michigan State — but in the end, the Hoosiers won only two league games and missed a bowl game for the first time since 2014. The defense, which began to show improvement when Allen arrived as the coordinator in 2016, took another step forward.

16. P.J. Fleck, Minnesota

Before: 9-4 (5-4) After: 5-7 (2-7)

Word of caution for those eager to call P.J. Fleck a bust after one season at Minnesota: His first team at Western Michigan went 1-11. Still, there is no denying that the Golden Gophers were a disappointment. Their two Big Ten wins came against hapless Illinois and a Nebraska team that lost six of its last seven. Minnesota did not score a point in its final eight quarters of the season.

17. Tim Lester, Western Michigan

Before: 13-1 (8-0) After: 6-6 (4-4)

Lester, a former quarterback at Western Michigan, inherited a roster that lost its two best players — quarterback Zach Terrell and All-America wide receiver Corey Davis — from the most successful team in school history. A step back was to be expected. Still, it should be a bit alarming that the Broncos' scoring margin regressed from plus-21.8 in 2016 to plus-4.9 in '17 and that the team was outgained on a per-play basis.

18. Randy Edsall, UConn

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 3-9 (2-6)

Edsall's first season of his second tour of duty at UConn went about as expected — the Huskies were quite a bit better on offense and quite a bit worse on defense. The result was another three-win season that featured little to get excited about.

19. Mike Sanford, Western Kentucky

Before: 11-3 (7-1) After: 6-7 (4-4)

Few teams regressed statistically as much as Western Kentucky last season. One year after outgaining their opponents by a staggering 2.5 yards per play (7.7 to 5.2), the Hilltoppers were outgained 5.5 to 5.3. They also averaged 20 points per game fewer en route to a 6-7 record.



20. Luke Fickell, Cincinnati

Before: 4-8 (1-7) After: 4-8 (2-6)

The Bearcats failed to make up much ground in the AAC East in their first season under Fickell. Cincinnati won three games against FBS opponents, by four points over Miami (Ohio) and by one point over both Tulane and UConn.

21. Matt Rhule, Baylor

Before: 7-6 (3-6) After: 1-11 (1-8)

Rhule was praised for adding stability to a Baylor program that has been making headlines for all of the wrong reasons, but the Bears' performance on the field was a big disappointment. And there was nothing fluky about the record; the Bears lost to Liberty and UTSA at home.

22. Jay Norvell, Nevada

Before: 5-7 (3-5) After: 3-9 (3-5)

Norvell's first month as a head coach resulted in an 0-5 record that included a loss at home to Idaho State. The Wolf Pack played better the rest of the season thanks to an offense that averaged 34 points over the final seven games.

23. Brent Brennan, San Jose State

Before: 4-8 (3-5) After: 2-11 (1-7)

San Jose State opened the season with a solid showing in a loss to South Florida followed by a 34-13 win over Cal Poly. The Spartans closed with a surprising 20-17 win over Wyoming. In between, it was a disaster; SJSU lost 10 straight games, only two by fewer than 20 points.

Ranking 2018's New Coaches

The coaching carousel started spinning back in July when Ole Miss fired Hugh Freeze and didn't stop until mid-January when Arizona tabbed Kevin Sumlin to replace Rich Rodriguez. In the end, 21 FBS programs will have new coaches in 2018 — or 20 if you don't count Ole Miss, which removed the interim tag from Matt Luke shortly after the season concluded. The most notable development: Three standing Power 5 coaches left for jobs at other Power 5 schools after there was no such movement in the two previous seasons. Another notable fact: Three new coaches will be at their alma maters (Luke at Ole Miss, Scott Frost at Nebraska and Jonathan Smith at Oregon State). Here is our ranking of the new coaches for the 2018 season.



1

Scott Frost, Nebraska

Previous Job: Head Coach, UCF

No school in recent memory has needed a head coach as badly as Nebraska needs Frost. The former Cornhusker quarterback arrives in Lincoln fresh off of a highly successful stint at UCF, where he guided the Knights to a 13–0 record just two years after the program failed to win a game. His teams play an exciting style as well; UCF led the nation in scoring (48.2 ppg) and ranked fifth in total offense (530.5 ypg) with a true freshman quarterback running the show. He is inheriting a Nebraska program that has not lost fewer than four games since 2003, the final season of the Frank Solich era. There are no guarantees in the world of college football, but it will be a significant surprise if Frost does not return Nebraska to national prominence.

2. Chip Kelly, UCLA

Previous Job: Head Coach, San Francisco 49ers (2016)

UCLA made a major statement about its commitment to football by spending big money to fire Jim Mora and his staff and hire Kelly, the biggest free agent on the coaching market. Kelly also was heavily courted by Florida, among others, but opted to return to the Pac-12, where he enjoyed a dominating four-year run with Oregon from 2009-12. Consider these numbers: Under Kelly's watch, the Ducks averaged 11.5 wins per season and recorded a 33–3 mark in league games. In his final three years, they ranked first, fourth and fifth in the nation in total offense and first, third and second in scoring offense. For comparison's sake, UCLA has not finished in the top 10 nationally in total offense any time in the past 10 years. That will no doubt change soon. With a fertile recruiting base and a system that players will want to play in, Kelly should have the Bruins competing for Pac-12 South titles on a regular basis in the near future.

3



Dan Mullen, Florida

Previous Job: Head Coach, Mississippi State

There are two schools of thought on Mullen. Some will wonder why a coach who has a losing record in the SEC (33–39 in nine seasons) can be so highly regarded. Others (who are correct) will note that any coach who takes Mississippi State to eight straight bowl games and has the Bulldogs ranked in the top 25 at some point in six of nine seasons is doing a fantastic job. Mullen will now have an opportunity to ply his trade at a school that has everything necessary to win a national championship. His first order of business will be to provide a spark to a Florida attack that, amazingly, has not finished higher than 10th in the SEC in total offense over the past eight seasons. In that same span, Mississippi State has finished in the top half of the SEC seven times. This is a great hire by Florida athletic director Scott Stricklin, Mullen's former boss in Starkville.

4. Jimbo Fisher, Texas A&M

Previous Job: Head Coach, Florida State

Texas A&M wanted a big name to replace Kevin Sumlin, and Fisher, who won a national title in 2013 at Florida State, most definitely fits the bill. In eight seasons in Tallahassee, the former Nick Saban assistant went 83–23 overall and 48–17 in the ACC. The Seminoles, however, have slipped a bit in recent seasons; after going 23–1 in the ACC from 2012-14, they were a rather ordinary 14–10 in league play in the past three years. Some tough injury luck and some unforeseen attrition at the quarterback position contributed to the recent struggles, but it's not a great look for a team with so much talent to finish 3–5 in the ACC (as FSU did in 2017). Still, Fisher is an outstanding coach with a proven track record who is at a school that has made a tremendous financial commitment to football since joining the SEC. A&M has everything in place — now it's time to win.

Frost: Scott Bruhn; Mullen: AP; Campbell: Scott Donaldson; Sumlin: Rebecca Sasnett/Arizona Athletics

Ranking 2018's New Coaches

5. Willie Taggart, Florida State

Previous Job: Head Coach, Oregon

Taggart, a Florida native who grew up rooting for the Seminoles, left Oregon after one season to return to his home state. His career record of 47–50 in eight seasons could be a red flag for some, but it must be noted that he has taken over a rebuild of some degree at each of his coaching stops. In fact, in his three previous jobs, Taggart inherited teams that went 0–12 (Western Kentucky), 3–9 (South Florida) and 4–8 (Oregon) in the season prior to his arrival. Highly respected defensive coordinator Jim Leavitt opted to remain at Oregon, but Taggart managed to hire two solid coordinators in Walt Bell from Maryland (offense) and Harlon Barnett from Michigan State (defense). Led by Taggart — one of the elite recruiters in the sport — this staff will have no trouble stockpiling talent in Tallahassee.

6. Joe Moorhead, Mississippi State

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Penn State

Moorhead's decision to leave his job as the head coach at Fordham to become the offensive coordinator at Penn State after the 2015 season proved to be the best move of his career. The Nittany Lions' offense improved drastically in his first season, increasing its production from 348.6 yards per game in 2015 to 432.6 in '16 and its scoring from 23.2 to 37.6 per game. Those numbers took another big jump in 2017 — 460.3 yards and 41.1 points per game. And not only is Moorhead an accomplished coordinator, but he's also had success as a head coach. He went 38–13 in four seasons at Fordham from 2012-15, including three appearances in the FCS playoffs. The only knock on this hire: He's never coached in the South. It's not a huge issue, but definitely something to monitor as he wades through the recruiting waters of the SEC.

7. Chad Morris, Arkansas

Previous Job: Head Coach, SMU

You can tell a lot about Morris' reputation in the media and among fans that a coach with a 14–22 record was universally praised as an outstanding hire at an SEC school. Morris' early struggles at SMU can largely be attributed to the absolute train wreck he inherited from June Jones. In 2014, the Mustangs went 1–11 and were outscored by a staggering 30.2 points per game. Morris gradually built the program from two wins in 2015 to five wins in 2016 to seven wins last fall. And the Ponies made significant strides offensively in each season, capped off by a unit that ranked 15th nationally in 2017 with 478.5 yards per game. Morris has deep ties in Texas from 16 years as a high school coach in the state and will no doubt make that an area of emphasis in recruiting as he aims to raise the talent level in Fayetteville.

8 Kevin Sumlin, Arizona

Previous Job: Head Coach, Texas A&M

There's not a long list of coaches who have been fired from one Power 5 job and enjoyed success at another. Sumlin, however, has a chance to buck the trend. He did an outstanding job at Houston (35–17 overall, 24–8 Conference USA) and managed to have a winning record (25–23) in the SEC in his six seasons at Texas A&M. The Aggies never quite reached expectations, but they were always competitive — they won at least four SEC games in five of six seasons — and often entertaining. On the negative side, there always seemed to be a little too much drama in College Station, from the handling of Johnny Manziel to the saga surrounding five-star quarterback recruits Kyle Allen and Kyler Murray. Expectations are lower at Arizona, and there is no doubt Sumlin will recruit at a high level. This was a nice hire late in the game after the school's divorce with Rich Rodriguez.





9. Steve Campbell, South Alabama

Previous Job: Head Coach, Central Arkansas

Campbell arrives after successful stints in the FCS ranks (33–15 in four seasons at Central Arkansas), in junior college (100–30 in 12 seasons at two schools in Mississippi) and Division II (27–8 in three seasons at Delta State). In his final two seasons at Central Arkansas, the Bears went a combined 17–1 in the Southland Conference and reached the second round of the FCS playoffs twice. He has coached in the FBS ranks twice, one year as the offensive coordinator at Middle Tennessee (2002) and one year as the offensive line coach at Mississippi State (2003). South Alabama has been competitive in the Sun Belt since joining the league in 2012 but has never really been a serious threat to win the conference title. Campbell's job is to change that.

10. Mario Cristobal, Oregon

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Oregon

Cristobal checked several important boxes for Oregon as it searched for a coach to replace Willie Taggart. He had experience as a head coach (six seasons at FIU); he is known as a terrific recruiter; and he had the support of the players. Those factors, combined with a rapidly approaching early signing period, led to the school's decision to remove the interim tag on Dec. 8, just three days after Florida State officially announced Taggart as its new head coach. The detractors will say that Cristobal was hired solely to salvage a top recruiting class, but he boasts a strong résumé that includes stops at Rutgers working for Greg Schiano and Alabama working for Nick Saban. He convinced highly regarded defensive coordinator Jim Leavitt to remain and tabbed Marcus Arroyo, a promising young coach at Oklahoma State, as his offensive coordinator. This seems like a high-risk/high-reward hire.

Ranking 2018's New Coaches

11 Jeremy Pruitt, Tennessee

Previous Job: Defensive Coordinator, Alabama

The long national nightmare that was the Tennessee coaching search mercifully ended in the first week of December with yet another Nick Saban assistant ascending to a head-coaching position in the SEC. Pruitt has done a tremendous job in his three stops as a defensive coordinator — 2013 Florida State (No. 3-ranked defense), 2014-15 Georgia (No. 17 and No. 7) and 2016-17 Alabama (No. 1 both seasons) — but he's had the luxury of coaching at three elite programs loaded with four- and five-star talent. He's also regarded as a top-notch recruiter, but again, he's been recruiting to Florida State, Georgia and Alabama — not exactly a tough sell. It's been a rough stretch at Tennessee, which is now two decades removed from the 1998 national championship. Pruitt will bring talent to Knoxville. The question then becomes: Will it be enough to contend with Georgia, which is finally realizing its potential under Kirby Smart, and Florida, which should be on the uptick under Dan Mullen?



12. Billy Napier, Louisiana

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Arizona State

Napier fits the profile as a first-time coach in the Sun Belt. He's young (39 when the season starts); he's been well schooled (coached under Dabo Swinney and Nick Saban); and he's been a coordinator at a Power 5 school (Clemson in 2009-10 and Arizona State in 2017). A former quarterback at Furman, Napier was named the offensive coordinator at Clemson in 2009 at the age of 29 only to be fired two years later after the Tigers' offense stalled. He rehabilitated his career under Saban's watch — first as analyst in 2011 and later as a wide receivers coach from 2013-16. Last year, Arizona State improved its total offense by 40.4 yards per game in his only season at the school. He takes over a Louisiana program that is eager to return to prominence in the Sun Belt after finishing no higher than fifth in the last three seasons.

13. Sonny Dykes, SMU

Previous Job: Offensive Analyst, TCU

Dykes, a native Texan, was the obvious choice for SMU after Chad Morris made the move to Arkansas. He has seven years of experience as a head coach, with mixed results at Louisiana Tech (22–15 in three seasons) and California (19–30 in four seasons). Despite his relative struggles in Berkeley, Dykes' teams excelled on offense. Even his 2013 team, which went 0–9 in the Pac-12, averaged 453.5 yards per game and ranked sixth in the league in total offense. His ensuing three teams ranked third, second and first, respectively, in the conference in total offense — without finishing over .500 in league play in any season. Dykes' teams at SMU might not win any AAC West titles, but they will play an entertaining brand of football.

14. Jonathan Smith, Oregon State

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Washington

A former walk-on and four-year starter at quarterback at Oregon State, Smith will forever be remembered for leading the Beavers to an 11–1 record in 2000, including a share of the Pac-10 title and a 41–9 victory over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl. Now it's time for Smith to make new memories in Corvallis. He takes over at his alma mater after a six-year apprenticeship under the highly respected Chris Petersen — two years as the quarterbacks coach at Boise State and four as the offensive coordinator at Washington. The job will not be easy: Oregon State has won a combined seven games in the last three seasons and is in the midst of its worst stretch since the mid-1990s — just prior to Smith's arrival as a player. His age (39) and lack of experience as a head coach make this hire a bit of a gamble, but Smith seems like the right coach at the right time for a program searching for some positive vibes.



15 Matt Luke, Ole Miss

Previous Job: Interim Head Coach, Ole Miss

After guiding Ole Miss to a 6–6 record — punctuated by a win at rival Mississippi State — under difficult circumstances, Luke was named the permanent head coach at his alma mater in late November. Some will argue that Luke was given the job only because of the school's ongoing issues with the NCAA, but there is no denying he did a solid job in his first season as a head coach at any level. With no postseason to play for, Ole Miss improved its win total by one game (both overall and in conference) and showed significant improvement statistically despite losing quarterback Shea Patterson to an injury in the seventh game. This is far from the sexiest hire, but Luke will do a fine job stabilizing a program that has been rocked by scandal in recent years.

Pruitt: Kyle Zedaker/Tennessee Athletics; Luke: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Lewis: Kent State Athletic Communications; Dimel: UTEP Athletics;; Bloomgren: Rice Athletics



16. Josh Heupel, UCF

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Missouri

UCF is one of the most desirable Group of 5 jobs in the nation and offers a great opportunity for Heupel, who resuscitated his career as the offensive coordinator at Missouri after getting fired at Oklahoma, his alma mater, in 2014. Missouri led the SEC in total offense in both 2016 and '17 after ranking last in the league in the category the year prior to his arrival. The Tigers played an up-tempo attack that featured big plays in the passing game while also having success running the ball. Expectations will be very high at UCF, which is coming off a 13–0 season highlighted by a win over Auburn in the Peach Bowl. With its stock soaring, UCF was in position to make a bigger splash with this hire but opted to tab another offensive coordinator from a Power 5 school after having great success going that route with Scott Frost.

17. Sean Lewis, Kent State

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Syracuse

This is a difficult job. Dating back to 1978, the Golden Flashes have won more than six games only twice — seven games in 1987 under Glen Mason and 11 in 2012 under Darrell Hazell. Now, Kent State turns to **Lewis (above)**, a Dino Babers disciple who will bring an offshoot of the Art Briles attack that was so successful at Baylor. Lewis was on Babers' staff at Bowling Green — Kent State's MAC East rival — in 2014-15 when the Falcons won a total of 18 games on the strength of offenses that averaged 432.9 yards in 2014 and 546.8 in 2015. (To put that in context, Kent State averaged 275.2 in 2017.) Lewis is no doubt a gamble; he's 31 — the youngest coach in the FBS ranks by three years — and he's never called plays. But Kent State is a program that needs to take chances. Maybe they can catch the next great offensive coach on his way up the food chain.

18. Chad Lunsford, Georgia Southern

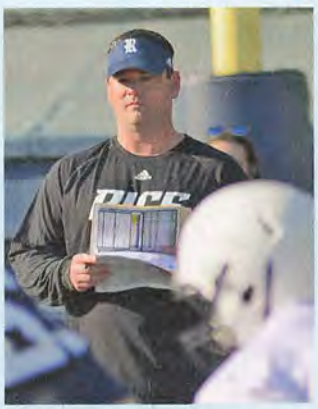
Previous Job: Interim Head Coach, Georgia Southern

Lunsford, the special teams coordinator during the ill-fated (and brief) Tyson Summers era, was promoted to the top job after leading the Eagles to a 2–4 record (after an 0–6 start) as the interim head coach. He was also on the Georgia Southern staff under Mike Sewak (2003-05), Jeff Monken (2013) and Willie Fritz (2014-15). With offensive coordinator Bob DeBesse, formerly at New Mexico, calling the plays, the Eagles will run a variation of the option attack that has been so successful under previous regimes. Georgia Southern is one of the better jobs in the Sun Belt Conference; don't be surprised if Lunsford has this program near the top of the league in the near future.

19. Mike Bloomgren, Rice

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Stanford

David Bailiff did some good things at Rice — two 10-win seasons and four bowl games in 11 years — but the program has struggled mightily in recent years. Bloomgren spent the last seven seasons working for David Shaw at Stanford, including the last four as the offensive coordinator — though he has never been the Cardinal's primary play caller. This hire makes sense for Rice. Bloomgren is a respected coordinator who has worked for an outstanding head coach at a school with a similar academic profile. Now, he just needs to win some games.



20. Dana Dimel, UTEP

Previous Job: Offensive Coordinator, Kansas State

Dimel no doubt figured his days as a head coach were done after getting fired at Houston in 2002 after compiling an 8–26 record in three seasons at the school. He did, however, have success at Wyoming, winning 22 games in three seasons from 1997-99. He's spent the last nine seasons at Kansas State, his alma mater, most recently as the Wildcats' offensive coordinator. Now he finds himself in charge once again at the age of 55 at a school that has had one winning season in the past 12 years. This was a curious hire.



21. Herm Edwards, Arizona State

Previous Job: Head Coach, Kansas City Chiefs (2008)

Arizona State's decision to replace Todd Graham, who went 31–23 in the Pac-12 in six seasons, with Edwards, who has not coached since 2008 and has not been in the collegiate game since 1989, is one of the most puzzling decisions in recent history. This might work out well for Arizona State, which has long been considered a sleeping giant. But it could also be a disaster. The guess here is that the latter scenario is more likely.

Coaches on the Hot Seat

HOT SEAT



1. David Beaty, Kansas (3–33, three seasons)

The Kansas administration continues to support Beaty, but that cannot continue much longer unless the Jayhawks begin to show significant progress. The numbers are horrifying: 1–32 vs. FBS opponents; last in the Big 12 in total offense all three seasons; last in the Big 12 in total defense in two of his three seasons; and negative scoring margins of 24.7 points per game (2017), 17.0 per game ('16) and 30.8 per game ('15).

2 Bob Davie, New Mexico (30–45, six seasons)

Davie orchestrated a nice turnaround in Albuquerque, guiding the Lobos to consecutive winning seasons in 2015-16, but things took a turn for the worse in 2017 — both on and off the field. UNM slumped to 3–9 overall (1–7 in the MW), and then Davie was suspended for 30 days in wake of an athletics department investigation into the football program. Tough times for the former Notre Dame coach.

3. Brad Lambert, Charlotte (17–41, five seasons)

After going a combined 10–12 as an FBS Independent in 2013-14 (the program's first two years in existence), Lambert and the 49ers have struggled in their transition to Conference USA. Charlotte is 7–29 overall and 4–20 in league play since joining C-USA in 2015, including a 1–11 mark in 2017. The 49ers scored seven points or fewer in five of 12 games last season.

4. Scottie Montgomery, East Carolina (6–18, two seasons)

Montgomery was considered a rising star while serving as the offensive coordinator at Duke, his alma mater, but he has struggled in his two years as the head coach at East Carolina. The Pirates have won only three games each season due largely to some epic struggles on defense. Not only did ECU rank last in the nation in 2017 in both total defense (541.7 ypg) and scoring defense (45.0 ppg), but the 7.7 yards per play allowed was the worst in college football in at least a decade.



5 Mike Jinks, Bowling Green (6–18, two seasons)

Bowling Green averaged nine wins from 2012-15 and won three straight MAC East titles ('13-15) but has slipped down the league's food chain. The Falcons closed 2016 with some momentum — consecutive wins over Akron, Kent State and Buffalo — but went 2–10 in 2017 thanks to a defense that allowed more than 500 yards per game.

6. Kliff Kingsbury, Texas Tech (30–33, five seasons)

Despite winning only six games in 2017, Kingsbury was retained for a sixth season at his alma mater for two reasons: The Red Raiders showed significant improvement on defense, and they closed the regular season with a win at Texas. Still, the pressure will be on to take a step forward in 2018. Texas Tech is 16–29 in the Big 12 under Kingsbury's watch and has not finished higher than a tie for fifth place.



7. Lovie Smith, Illinois (5–19, two seasons)

It's been only two seasons, but the Lovie Smith experiment is not going well. Illinois regressed from 3–9 overall (2–7 in the Big Ten) in 2016 to 2–10 (0–9) last fall, with eight of the nine conference losses coming by 10 points or more. The Fighting Illini were very young in 2017 — they started nine freshmen and four sophomores in the finale against Northwestern — but there is no indication that they are talented. Recent hires at Purdue (Jeff Brohm), Minnesota (P.J. Fleck) and Nebraska (Scott Frost) will make Smith's job more difficult.

Davie; Jinks: AP; Smith: Tom Lynn; Mason, Harbaugh: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

Getting Warm

Larry Fedora, North Carolina

The Tar Heels have had a losing record in two of the last four seasons — including a 3–9 mark in 2017 — and have won more than eight games only once in Fedora's six seasons. Another disappointing season would no doubt put him on the hot seat.

Clay Helton, USC

Helton is 21–6 overall and 15–3 in the Pac-12 in his two full seasons as the boss at USC, but the locals don't seem convinced he is the right coach for the long term. Lopsided losses to Notre Dame (49–17) and Ohio State (24–7) overshadowed an otherwise solid 2017 season.

Paul Johnson, Georgia Tech

Johnson signed a two-year contract extension in the offseason that carries his deal through the 2022 season, but things could heat up in Atlanta if Georgia Tech struggles again in 2017. The Jackets are 17–19 overall and 9–15 in the ACC in the last three years.



Derek Mason, Vanderbilt

Mason reached a bowl game in 2016 and has defeated Tennessee in consecutive seasons, but he is 18–31 overall and just 6–26 in the SEC in four seasons. A defense that shined in 2015 and '16 took a big step back last fall.

Matt Wells, Utah State

Wells won a combined 19 games in his first two seasons but is 15–23 over the last three. He has one win in the past two years over an FBS team that went on to have a winning record (Arkansas State, 2016).

Everett Withers, Texas State

He's recruited very well, but Withers will need to show some results on the field in the very near future. The Bobcats are 4–20 overall and a horrid 1–15 in the Sun Belt in his two seasons.



No, he's not on the Hot Seat

Jim Harbaugh, Michigan

We realize he has yet to finish higher than third place in the Big Ten East. We realize he is a combined 1–5 against Michigan State and Ohio State. And we realize his 2017 season ended with three straight losses. But much to the dismay of his detractors, Harbaugh is not on the hot seat. Now the pressure will start to mount if the Wolverines fail to live up to their lofty expectations in 2018, but Harbaugh is in no danger of losing his job in the short term.

But he might be...

Herm Edwards, Arizona State

A first-year coach has never been on our Hot Seat list, but there have not been many (if any) first-year coaches like Edwards. The new boss in Tempe has not coached a game since 2008, his final season with the Kansas City Chiefs, and has not coached in college since finishing a three-year run as an assistant at San Jose State in 1989. This was a high-risk/medium-reward move by ASU athletic director Ray Anderson. It wouldn't be a shock if Edwards was back at ESPN in a year.

Continuity (or lack thereof)

Only 23 of the 65 Power 5 schools (35.4 percent) have had their current coach in place for at least five seasons. That number is down from 28 of 66 (42.4 percent) in 2008, but surprisingly up quite a bit from 1998, when 22 of the 63 teams (34.9 percent) in BCS conferences fit this criterion. So while there is more pressure than ever to win now, and schools are seemingly cutting ties after three or four years more frequently, the data indicates — at least in this unscientific study — that the number of coaches who remain at a program for a long period of time has not decreased in the past few decades. Below is the list of the 23 Power 5 schools that have a coach with at least five years of tenure heading into the 2018 season. (Note: Notre Dame is included in this data.)

ACC (6/14)
Boston College, Steve Addazio
Clemson, Dabo Swinney
Duke, David Cutcliffe
Georgia Tech, Paul Johnson
NC State, Dave Doeren
North Carolina, Larry Fedora

Big 12 (5/10)
Kansas State, Bill Snyder
Oklahoma State, Mike Gundy
TCU, Gary Patterson
Texas Tech, Kliff Kingsbury
West Virginia, Dana Holgorsen

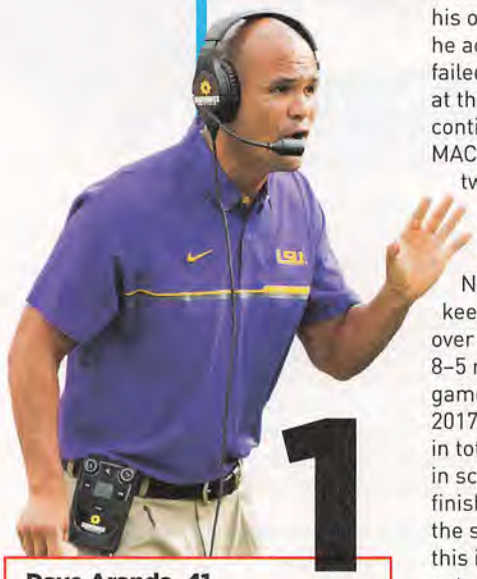
Big Ten (4/14)
Iowa, Kirk Ferentz
Michigan State, Mark Dantonio
Northwestern, Pat Fitzgerald
Ohio State, Urban Meyer

Pac-12 (4/12)
Colorado, Mike MacIntyre
Stanford, David Shaw
Utah, Kyle Whittingham
Washington State, Mike Leach

SEC (3/14)
Alabama, Nick Saban
Auburn, Gus Malzahn
Kentucky, Mark Stoops

Independent (1/1)
Notre Dame, Brian Kelly

Coaches on the Rise



Dave Aranda, 41
Defensive Coordinator, LSU
Aranda further cements his reputation as one of the game's elite defensive coordinators each season. Last year, LSU ranked 12th nationally in total defense, and that was the worst ranking for an Aranda-coached defense in his five seasons at Power 5 schools. Texas A&M made a big push for Aranda in the offseason, but he opted to remain at LSU after signing a reported four-year, $10 million contract. It would be a major surprise if he were not a head coach somewhere before that deal expired.

2. Neal Brown, 38
Head Coach, Troy
After winning only four games in his first season at Troy, Brown has won 21 games over the last two seasons and recorded a 13–3 mark in the Sun Belt. The Trojans made national headlines last September with a 24–21 win at LSU, the school's first over an SEC opponent since 2001. In 2016, Troy nearly knocked off eventual national champion Clemson in Week 2, losing 30–24 in Death Valley.

3. Jason Candle, 38
Head Coach, Toledo
Candle is 20–7 overall and 13–3 in the MAC in his two full seasons after taking over for his old boss, Matt Campbell. And last year, he accomplished something Campbell failed to do — win a league title, the first at the school since 2004. The Rockets continue to thrive on offense, leading the MAC in yards per game in each of the past two seasons.

4. Mike Norvell, 36
Head Coach, Memphis
Norvell has done a masterful job keeping Memphis relevant after taking over for Justin Fuente. He followed up an 8–5 rookie season in 2016 by winning 10 games and the AAC West Division title in 2017. The Tigers ranked fourth nationally in total offense (532.1 ypg) and second in scoring offense (45.5 ppg) last fall and finished ranked in the final AP Top 25 for the second time in school history. Despite this impressive résumé, Norvell did not get a serious look for any of several SEC openings in the offseason.

5. Bryan Harsin, 41
Head Coach, Boise State
Harsin got the call to take over at his alma mater in 2014 after Chris Petersen finally made the decision to take a Power 5 job. The former Bronco quarterback is 42–12 overall and 25–7 in the Mountain West in four seasons, and the Broncos have finished in the top four in the league in both total offense and total defense each season. He also spent one season at Arkansas State, where he guided the Red Wolves to a tie for first in the Sun Belt.

6. Scott Satterfield, 45
Head Coach, Appalachian State
The Mountaineers have made a remarkably smooth transition from the FCS to FBS ranks under Satterfield's watch. After going 4–8 overall and 4–4 in the Southern Conference in 2013 — the school's final season in the FCS — Appalachian State is 37–14 overall and 27–5 in the Sun Belt from '14-17. Over the last two seasons, five of its seven losses have come by seven points or fewer, including an OT loss to Tennessee in 2016 and a one-point loss to Wake Forest in 2017.

7. Blake Anderson, 49,
Head Coach, Arkansas State
After losing Hugh Freeze, Gus Malzahn and Bryan Harsin after only one season apiece, Arkansas State was seeking some stability when it hired Anderson in 2014. The former offensive coordinator at North Carolina has given the Red Wolves four solid seasons that have included two Sun Belt titles and four bowl games. The Red Wolves have ranked in the top two in the league in total offense in three of four seasons, and last season they ranked third nationally with 81.3 offensive plays per game.

8. Todd Orlando, 47
Defensive Coordinator, Texas
Orlando has been a coordinator in the FBS ranks since 2005, but his career took off when he joined Tom Herman's first staff at Houston in 2015. A former linebacker at Wisconsin in the early 1990s, Orlando did a nice job in his first season at Texas; the Longhorns in 2017 allowed 82.7 fewer yards and 10.3 fewer points per game than in 2016. And as the talent level continues to rise in Austin, the UT defense will no doubt be among the best in the league on an annual basis.

9. Jim Leonhard, 35
Defensive Coordinator, Wisconsin
Leonhard was promoted to the defensive coordinator post after only one season as a position coach at his alma mater. The results were strong for the three-time All-American and longtime NFL safety. In 2017, the Badgers ranked second in the nation in total defense (262.1 ypg) and third in scoring defense (13.9 ppg). They allowed only seven rushing touchdowns (second fewest in the nation) and intercepted 20 passes (tied for second nationally). This was a defense without a weakness.

10. Seth Littrell, 41
Head Coach, North Texas
Littrell has directed a quick turnaround at North Texas, guiding the Mean Green to four-game improvements in each of his two seasons — from 1–11 the year prior to his arrival to 5–8 in 2016 and 9–5 (and a C-USA West title) in 2017. His 14 wins over the last two years are the most at North Texas since 2003-04, the tail end of Darrell Dickey's run of four straight Sun Belt titles.

5 MORE TO WATCH

Beau Baldwin, 46, OC, California
Ryan Day, 39, Co-OC, Ohio State
Mike Elko, 40, DC, Texas A&M
Pete Golding, 34, Co-DC, Alabama
Alex Grinch, 37, Co-DC, Ohio State

Aranda: AP; Elko: Texas A&M Athletics; Rahne: Penn State Athletics; Bell: Colin Abbey/FSU

Top Coordinator Hires for 2018



1

Mike Elko, DC, Texas A&M
New Texas A&M coach Jimbo Fisher lured Elko away from Notre Dame to fix an area that has plagued this program since it joined the SEC. The Aggies have not once finished in the top half of the league in total defense and have ranked no higher than seventh in scoring defense. That should change under Elko, who paid immediate dividends in his one season at Notre Dame after a strong — and under the radar — run at Wake Forest under Dave Clawson.

2. Alex Grinch, DC, Ohio State
Grinch was a little-known defensive backs coach at Missouri when Mike Leach hired him in 2015 to take over the Washington State defense. The results were impressive. The Cougars improved from 442.3 yards per game allowed the season prior to his arrival to 416.8 in Year 1, 405.9 in Year 2 and 323.3 in Year 3. They made similar gains in scoring defense, culminating with an average of 25.8 points allowed in 2017, the lowest at Wazzu since 2003. Grinch will team with Greg Schiano as co-defensive coordinators for the Buckeyes.

3. Todd Grantham, DC, Florida
Grantham is making the move from Mississippi State to Florida with new Gator head coach Dan Mullen. Grantham did a tremendous job in his only season in Starkville; the Bulldogs made dramatic improvements in total defense (459.1 ypg in 2016 to 306.3 in 2017) and scoring defense (31.8 ppg to 20.9).

4. Bob Shoop, DC, Mississippi State
Shoop carved out a reputation as one of the game's top coordinators after successful stints at Vanderbilt (2011-13) and Penn State (2014-15), but his defenses struggled mightily in his two seasons at Tennessee. He now has a chance for a fresh start at Mississippi State working under new head coach Joe Moorhead.

5. Tim Cramsey, OC, Marshall
Cramsey, who worked for Chip Kelly at New Hampshire in the 2000s, comes to Marshall after a successful one-year stint at Sam Houston State. In 2017, the Bearkats averaged 538.1 yards of offense and had a 5,000-yard passer, an 1,100-yard rusher and two 1,200-yard receivers. Previously, Cramsey was the offensive coordinator at Nevada, Montana State and FIU.

6. Pete Golding, Co-DC, Alabama
Nick Saban plucked Golding, a rising star in the coaching world, off of the UTSA staff as Alabama's 10th assistant and gave him the title of co-defensive coordinator and inside linebackers coach. During his two years at UTSA, the Roadrunners ranked first and fourth in Conference USA in total defense and first and third in scoring defense.

7

Walt Bell, OC, Florida State
A Larry Fedora protégé, Bell received his first coordinator job at Arkansas State in 2014, moved to Maryland in 2016 and then took this position at Florida State under new coach Willie Taggart. His offenses struggled at Maryland due in large part to a series of injuries at the quarterback position.



8. Tracy Claeys, DC, Washington State
Claeys was out of coaching in 2017 after being fired after one full season as the head coach at Minnesota. He previously served as the defensive coordinator at Minnesota, Northern Illinois, Southern Illinois and Emporia State — working for Jerry Kill at every spot.

9. Bush Hamdan, OC, Washington
Hamdan returns to Washington after a one-year stint as the quarterbacks coach with the Atlanta Falcons. He previously served as UW's wide receivers coach and passing game coordinator in 2016 and offensive quality control assistant in 2015.



10

Ricky Rahne, OC, Penn State
Rahne has been the quarterbacks coach for James Franklin dating back to Franklin's first season at Vanderbilt in 2011. He was passed over for the OC job two years ago in favor of Joe Moorhead, at the time the head coach at Fordham. With Moorhead off to Mississippi State, Rahne gets his shot to run the Nittany Lions' offense.

11. Kendal Briles, OC, Houston
Lane Kiffin received most of the credit for FAU's breakout 2017 season, but it was Briles calling most of the shots for an offense that averaged 40.6 points and 498.4 yards per game. Briles still carries — and probably always will carry — some baggage from his days working for his father at Baylor, but Houston obviously felt comfortable with the hire.

12. Rhett Lashlee, OC, SMU
After working for Gus Malzahn at both Arkansas State and Auburn for five seasons, Lashlee branched out on his own for one season at UConn. The raw numbers aren't overly impressive (415.2 yards and 23.6 points per game), but the Huskies improved by 95.2 yards and 8.8 points per game.

QB Transfers



Woody Barrett,
Auburn to Kent State (via JC)

A former four-star recruit, Barrett transferred to Copiah-Lincoln (Miss.) Community College after spring practice in 2017. He will play for new Kent State coach Sean Lewis, a Dino Babers disciple who was the offensive coordinator at Syracuse last season.

Dru Brown,
Hawaii to Oklahoma State

Brown (above, right) threw for 5,273 yards and 37 touchdowns in his two seasons at Hawaii after transferring from junior college. He will be expected to replace Mason Rudolph as the triggerman for the high-octane Oklahoma State offense.

Keller Chryst,
Stanford to Tennessee



Chryst was the No. 3 pro-style QB recruit in the Class of 2014, but his stay on The Farm was hampered by injury and inconsistent play. He will have one season of eligibility as a graduate transfer and will have a great opportunity to start for the Volunteers.

KJ Carta-Samuels,
Washington to Colorado State

A former four-star recruit, Carta-Samuels backed up Jake Browning for the past three seasons after redshirting in 2014. He is the frontrunner to replace Nick Stevens as the Rams' starter.

Brandon Dawkins,
Arizona to Indiana

Dawkins threw for 2,418 yards and 15 TDs and rushed for 1,582 and 20 scores in three seasons at Arizona. He started nine games in 2016 and the first five in 2017 before losing his job to Khalil Tate.

Kai Locksley,
Texas to UTEP (via JC)

The son of Alabama offensive coordinator Mike Locksley spent a season at Texas before transferring to Iowa Western Community College. The dual threat should thrive under head coach Dana Dimel.

Gardner Minshew,
East Carolina to Washington State

After throwing for 2,140 yards with 16 TDs in 2017, Minshew announced he was heading to Alabama as a grad transfer — then changed course and will now spend his final season on the Palouse.

James Morgan,
Bowling Green to FIU

Morgan started 13 games in the past two seasons at Bowling Green, throwing for 3,342 yards and 25 TDs. He will have two seasons of eligibility remaining.

Shea Patterson,
Ole Miss to Michigan

If eligible in 2018, Patterson becomes the most impactful transfer in the nation. A five-star recruit, Patterson threw for 3,139 yards and 23 TDs in 10 games at Ole Miss.

Chris Robison,
Oklahoma to FAU

Robison, a top-200 national recruit in the Class of 2017, left Oklahoma after just one semester and one summer in Norman. He and De'Andre Johnson, of "Last Chance U" fame, are the top two candidates to replace Jason Driskel.

Bryce Perkins,
Arizona State to Virginia (via JC)

Perkins did not attempt a pass at Arizona State and played last fall at Arizona Western College. He will have a chance to replace Kurt Benkert as the Cavs QB.

Alex Thomson,
Wagner to Marshall

Thomson was one of the most highly sought-after grad transfers on the market and picked Marshall over Baylor and Tennessee. He missed most of last season with a shoulder injury.

Brady White,
Arizona State to Memphis

White was the highest-rated quarterback to sign with Arizona State in the internet recruiting era but started only one game and attempted only 49 passes in his three seasons in Tempe. He will have two years of eligibility as a graduate transfer.

Terry Wilson,
Oregon to Kentucky (via JC)

Wilson redshirted at Oregon in 2016 before spending last season at Garden City (Kan.) Community College.

Vic Viramontes,
California to Minnesota (via JC)

Viramontes threw for 1,868 yards and rushed for 1,346 while accounting for a total of 43 touchdowns in his only season at Riverside (Calif.) City College. He has a great opportunity to win the job.

15 OTHER NOTABLE TRANSFERS

Calvin Anderson, OL
Rice to Texas

Kenny Bigelow, DL
USC to West Virginia

Byron Cowart, OL
Auburn to Maryland

Breiden Fehoko, DL
Texas Tech to LSU

Jonathan Giles, WR
Texas Tech to LSU

Jake Fruhmorgen, OL
Clemson to Baylor

Alohi Gilman, DB
Navy to Notre Dame

Jon Hilliman, RB
Boston College to Rutgers

Casey Hughes, DB
Utah to Michigan

Jalen Hurd, ATH
Tennessee to Baylor

P.J. Mbanasor, CB
Oklahoma to Louisville

Travon McMillian, RB
Virginia Tech to Colorado

Casey Tucker, OL
Stanford to Arizona State

Ke'Shawn Vaughn, RB
Illinois to Vanderbilt

Tre Watson, LB
Illinois to Maryland

Breakout Players

Cam Akers, RB, Florida State

New coach Willie Taggart inherits plenty of talent to work with on offense next fall. One of the most exciting weapons is Akers, a five-star recruit from the 2017 signing class. Akers shared carries with Jacques Patrick last fall and still ended up with 1,025 yards and seven rushing scores and caught 16 passes for 116 yards and a touchdown.

Trajan Bandy, CB, Miami (Fla.)

The Hurricanes should feature one of the nation's top defensive backfields in 2018 thanks in part to the return of cornerback Michael Jackson and safety Jaquan Johnson. The new star on the scene is **Bandy (below)**. As a freshman in 2017, he broke up six passes, registered 25 tackles and intercepted one pass.



Tarik Black/Donovan Peoples-Jones, WRs, Michigan

Michigan's passing attack should take a significant step forward in 2018 regardless of who starts at quarterback. Peoples-Jones caught 22 passes for 277 yards as a true freshman last season and should see his role increase in 2018. Black, also a true freshman in 2017, caught 11 passes through three games before suffering a season-ending injury.

Hunter Bryant, TE, Washington

Washington's passing attack needs new weapons to emerge to replace wide receiver Dante Pettis. Bryant flashed potential in nine games last year, catching 22 passes for 331 yards and a touchdown.



Stephen Carr, RB, USC

USC's offense will have to reload in 2018, as quarterback Sam Darnold, running back Ronald Jones and receiver Deontay Burnett all jumped to the NFL a year early. However, the cupboard isn't bare for coordinator Tee Martin. Carr is a future star after rushing for 363 yards and three scores as a freshman in 2017. He should be the feature back in 2018.

Dylan Moses, LB, Alabama

Moses, a former five-star recruit, likely will emerge as the next great Alabama linebacker. The Florida native started two games and recorded 30 tackles as a true freshman. He missed the two CFB Playoff games with a foot injury but will be back to full health in the fall.

Kyler Murray, QB, Oklahoma

Baker Mayfield leaves big shoes to fill in Norman, but Oklahoma's offense should be in good hands with Murray — a former transfer from Texas A&M — at the controls. More of a dual-threat than his predecessor, Murray completed 18-of-21 passes for 359 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 142 yards on 14 attempts in spot duty last season.

Jeffrey Okudah, CB, Ohio State

Okudah, the top-ranked cornerback by the 247Sports Composite in the Class of 2017, played in every game as a reserve as a true freshman. With Denzel Ward off to the NFL, Okudah is ready to take on a full-time role.

Jawon Pass, QB, Louisville

Pass has the skill set to become coach Bobby Petrino's next star pupil under center. After a redshirt year, Pass appeared in six games as Lamar Jackson's backup in 2017. In limited action, he completed 23-of-33 passes for 238 yards and two scores and rushed for 62 yards and a TD on 13 attempts.

Malcolm Perry, QB, Navy

Perry started the 2017 season at slot back but shifted to quarterback late in the year. The Tennessee native provided a spark for Navy's offense, rushing for 282 yards in a win against SMU, 250 against Army and 114 in the victory over Virginia in the Military Bowl.

Jaelan Phillips, DL, UCLA

Phillips ranked as the No. 1 overall recruit in the 247Sports Composite in 2017 but was limited to just seven games as a freshman due to injury. He should emerge as one of the top defensive linemen in the nation as a sophomore.



Jalen Reagor, WR, TCU

The new quarterback at TCU — either Justin Rogers or Shawn Robinson — needs to get the ball in Reagor's hands. As a true freshman in 2017, the former top-50 national recruit caught 33 passes for 576 yards and eight scores.

Miles Sanders, RB, Penn State

It's no secret the Nittany Lions are going to miss running back Saquon Barkley. But coach James Franklin has recruited well, and Sanders — a former five-star prospect in the 2016 signing class — is poised to take over the No. 1 role in the backfield. He has averaged 6.7 yards per carry in limited duty the last two years.

Dillon Stoner, WR, Oklahoma State

Oklahoma State possessed the nation's best receiving corps in 2017, but this unit is set to undergo some renovations with the loss of James Washington and Marcell Ateman. Stoner could emerge as the No. 1 target after catching 44 passes for 576 yards and six touchdowns as a freshman in 2017.

Tua Tagovailoa, QB, Alabama

Tagovailoa jumped into the national spotlight with his performance against Georgia in the national championship and should be the starting quarterback in 2018. The sample size is small, but the Hawaii native has been impressive.

Chryst, Carr, Brown: Peter Brouillet; Patterson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Bandy: Tom DiPace; Reagor Jay Biggerstaff

Back from Injury

Trey Adams, OL, Washington
A first-team All-Pac-12 pick in 2016, Adams went down with a knee injury in a Week 7 loss at Arizona State. He will return to anchor the Huskies' offensive line from the left tackle spot.

Tarik Black, WR, Michigan
A key member of Michigan's 2017 recruiting class, Black was limited to three games and 11 receptions as a true freshman. He will be expected to play a big role in the Wolverines' passing attack this fall.



Tre Bryant, RB, Nebraska
After rushing for a total of 172 yards as a freshman in 2016, Bryant erupted for 192 yards in the opener against Arkansas State and had 107 in Week 2 against Oregon before suffering a season-ending knee injury. He will be a weapon for new Huskers head coach Scott Frost.

Damarea Crockett, RB, Missouri
Crockett rushed for 1,062 yards on a 6.9-yard average as a true freshman in 2016 and had 481 on a 6.0 average through six-plus games in 2017 before a shoulder injury kept him out for the rest of the season.

Deondre Francois, QB, Florida State
Francois' season-ending knee injury in Week 1 was a crushing blow to Florida State, which was forced to turn the offense over to true freshman James Blackman. Francois and Blackman will battle for the top job in 2018.

QBs on the mend

Florida State's Deondre Francois and Maryland's Kasim Hill and Tyrrell Pigrome were each injured early in the 2017 season and missed a combined 32 games. There was also a group of prominent quarterbacks who went down late in the regular season or in the bowl game, and each is expected back for the 2018 season: Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State (broken ankle in regular-season finale); Will Grier, West Virginia (broken finger against Texas in mid-November); Clayton Thorson, Northwestern (torn ACL in the bowl game); David Blough, Purdue (dislocated ankle in early November); Elijah Sindelar, Purdue (ACL in mid-November but played rest of the season); Anthony Brown, Boston College (lower leg injury in mid-November); and Tanner Mangum, BYU (Achilles in early November).

Porter Gustin, LB, USC
A former top-50 national recruit, Gustin played in only four games last season due to various injuries. He will return for his senior season as the starting outside linebacker.

Kasim Hill, Tyrrell Pigrome, QBs, Maryland
Pigrome tore the ACL in his right knee during Maryland's Week 1 upset win at Texas. Hill, his replacement, suffered the same injury two games later in a loss to UCF. Both are expected to be ready for the start of the 2018 season.

Darrin Kirkland, LB, Tennessee
After starting 16 games in his first two seasons, Kirkland was expected to be the leader of the Tennessee defense last fall from his middle linebacker spot. He didn't play a snap, however, after injuring his knee in preseason camp.

Ryan Pulley, CB, Arkansas
Pulley was a preseason All-SEC candidate last season but didn't make it out of the first game of the season. He went down with a right pectoral injury in the second quarter of the loss to TCU and did not play another snap.

John Reid, CB, Penn State
Reid, who started 14 games as a sophomore in 2016, injured his knee last spring and missed the entire 2017 season. He will be a preseason All-Big Ten pick heading into the fall.

Demetris Robertson, WR, California
The No. 1 wide receiver recruit in the Class of 2016, Robertson caught 50 passes for 767 yards and seven TDs as a true freshman but was limited to two games and seven catches in 2017 due to a "lower body" injury. He should be one of the top wide receivers in the Pac-12 this season.

Deebo Samuel, WR, South Carolina
Samuel's injury — he suffered a broken leg in Week 3 — was a huge setback for the South Carolina offense. In 2016, he caught 59 passes for 783 yards and added six rushing touchdowns. He is also a threat on special teams.

Cody Thompson, WR, Toledo
Thompson caught 64 passes for 1,269 yards as a junior in 2016 and was on pace for even more last fall before injuring his leg in the fifth game of the season. He had 28 receptions and was averaging 19.2 yards per catch at the time of his injury.

Nick Westbrook, WR, Indiana
Westbrook was very productive as a sophomore in 2016, averaging 18.4 yards on his 54 catches for 995 yards and six touchdowns. His 2017 season ended after one play — he was injured on the opening kickoff in Week 1 against Ohio State.

Antoine Winfield Jr., CB, Minnesota
The son of the former NFL cornerback broke into the starting lineup as a true freshman in 2016 but was limited to four games last season due to a hamstring injury in late September.

Crockett: Tim Umphrey; Oliver: AP; Stockstill: Brent Beerends, MT Athletic Communications; Rypien: John C. Kelly/Boise State University

Top Group of 5 Players



1

Ed Oliver, DL, Houston

Oliver has been one of the best players in the country since the first game of his freshman season. He earned first-team All-America honors by seven media outlets as a true freshman in 2016 and was a consensus All-American last fall.

2. McKenzie Milton, QB, UCF
Milton was ranked as the No. 1,161 recruit in the nation by the 247Sports Composite coming out of Kapolei, Hawaii, in 2016. Two years later, he threw for 4,037 yards and 37 touchdowns and rushed for 613 yards and eight scores for an undefeated UCF team.

3. Sutton Smith, DE, Northern Illinois
Smith was arguably the most improved player in college football last season, recording 14.0 sacks and earning MAC Defense Player of the Year honors after failing to start a single game as a redshirt freshman in 2016.

4. Devin Singletary, RB, FAU
Singletary thrived in Lane Kiffin's offense, rushing for 1,920 yards and 32 touchdowns (most in the nation) for the Conference USA champs. In two years, he has 2,941 yards rushing and 44 touchdowns.

5. Andrew Wingard, S, Wyoming
Wingard is a two-time first-team All-Mountain West pick who has recorded 245 tackles over the last two seasons.

6. Max Scharping, OL, Northern Illinois
Scharping has been a standout on the Huskies' offensive line for the last three seasons, starting at right tackle in 2015 and '16 and left tackle last season. He earned first-team All-MAC honors in both '16 and '17.

7. Penny Hart, WR, Georgia State
Hart bounced back from a season-ending injury in 2016 to catch 74 passes for 1,121 yards and eight touchdowns as a sophomore in 2017. Two years earlier, he caught 71 receptions for 1,099 as a true freshman.

8. Anthony Johnson, WR, Buffalo
Johnson, a former junior college transfer, won the receiving triple crown in the MAC, leading the league in receptions (76), yards (1,356) and touchdown catches (14). Over the final three games, he totaled 468 yards on a 22.3 yards-per-catch average with eight TDs.

9. Mason Fine, QB, North Texas
Fine was a great find by North Texas coach Seth Littrell. Two years ago, he was a two-star recruit without any FBS offers. Last year, he threw for 4,052 yards and 31 TDs and led the Mean Green to the C-USA West title.



10

Brent Stockstill, QB, Middle Tennessee

Stockstill's junior season was derailed by an injury, but the son of the Blue Raiders' coach has been extremely productive since he took over as the starting QB as a redshirt freshman in 2015.

11. Jaylon Ferguson, DL, Louisiana Tech
Ferguson has been a force on the Bulldogs' defensive line, recording a total of 21.5 sacks over the last two seasons. He is a two-time first-team All-C-USA pick.

12. Khalil Hodge, LB, Buffalo
Hodge is a two-time All-MAC honoree who has recorded an astounding 277 tackles in his two seasons with the Bulls after transferring from the junior college ranks.



13. Brett Rypien, QB, Boise State
The nephew of former Super Bowl-winning quarterback Mark Rypien is a two-time first-team All-Mountain West quarterback who has thrown for 9,873 yards and 60 TDs in his three years as the Broncos' starter.

14. Jalin Moore, RB, Appalachian State
Moore has led the Sun Belt in rushing in each of the last two years and heads into his senior season with 3,170 yards on a 6.1-yard average.

15. Ulysees Gilbert, LB, Akron
Gilbert has earned first-team All-MAC honors in each of his two seasons as a starter. Last season, he filled up the stat sheet with 141 tackles, five sacks, three interceptions and one forced fumble.

16. Cody Thompson, Diontae Johnson, WRs, Toledo
Johnson caught 74 passes for 1,278 yards and 13 touchdowns as a sophomore in 2017. A leg injury limited Thompson to 28 catches in four-plus games last season. He had 64 receptions for 1,269 yards in 2016.

17. John Keenoy, OL, Western Michigan
Keenoy won the starting center position as a true freshman in 2015 and has played in 37 of a possible 38 games over the last three years. He was a first-team All-MAC pick in 2017.

18. Carl Granderson, DL, Wyoming
Granderson returned from a knee injury that sidelined him for the second half of the 2016 season, leading the team with 9.5 sacks.

19. Malik Reed, LB, Nevada
Reed is making the move from defensive end — where he earned first-team All-MW honors in 2017 — to outside linebacker for his senior season.

20. Malcolm Perry, QB, Navy
Perry started last season as a slot back but took over as the Midshipmen's starting quarterback late in the year. He rushed for 1,182 yards on a gaudy 8.6-yard average.

Teams on the RISE

By Bill Connelly


Aeris Williams

2017 S&P+ RANKINGS

S&P+ Rk	Team (Record)
1.	Ohio State (12–2)
2.	Alabama (13–1)
3.	Georgia (13–2)
4.	Penn State (11–2)
5.	Washington (10–3)
6.	Wisconsin (13–1)
7.	UCF (13–0)
8.	Clemson (12–2)
9.	Oklahoma (12–2)
10.	Auburn (10–4)
11.	FAU (11–3)
12.	Oklahoma State (10–3)
13.	Notre Dame (10–3)
14.	TCU (11–3)
15.	USF (10–2)
16.	Louisville (8–5)
17.	Miami (10–3)
18.	Appalachian State (9–4)
19.	LSU (9–4)
20.	Memphis (10–3)

College football is the ultimate small-sample-size sport. While Major League Baseball teams get more than 160 chances to distinguish themselves, and NHL and NBA teams get more than 80, college football teams get between 12 and 15. A college football team's record at the end of the year is the equivalent to an NBA team's record in mid-November; it doesn't tell you the whole story about a team's quality.

I have been maintaining the S&P+ ratings at FootballOutsiders.com since 2008. They represent an attempt to dig down to a level few computer ratings go, calculating efficiency and explosiveness at the play-by-play level. They combine aspects of football that affect college football's Five Factors — efficiency, explosiveness, field position, finishing drives, and turnovers — into a single, opponent-adjusted number.

This system of ratings attempts to derive value from every play and drive of a given game (filtering out garbage time), and it watches every game, so to speak. We probably do not. It and other computer ratings can drop pretty strong hints regarding who's about to have a really good — or really poor — season.

In 2007, for instance, Urban Meyer's Florida Gators went 9–4 thanks to three gut-wrenching losses but ranked third in S&P+. The next year, they won the national title. In 2011, Notre Dame went 8–5 and ranked 11th while Texas A&M ranked eighth but blew a ton of leads and went 7–6. The next year, they went a combined 23–3. More recently, Notre Dame went 4–8 in 2016 but ranked a lofty 26th. In 2017, the Irish went 10–3.

Last year, in this space, we discussed some potential statistical outliers for the 2017 season and listed six teams that might end up doing quite a bit better than their 2016 results would suggest. They were Auburn, LSU, Notre Dame, Texas, South Carolina and Oregon State. Even with Oregon State bombing out to 1–11, these teams improved from a combined 35–39 record to 46–32, an increase of nearly two wins per team.

Meanwhile, we listed three teams that, per the computers, were likely to regress in 2017: Michigan, West Virginia and Nebraska. They went from a combined 29–10 to 19–19.

What are the computers — and the S&P+ rankings in particular — saying about 2018? To answer that, let's begin by once again looking at teams that may have either looked out of place in the 2017 rankings or might be due a surprise in 2018. The 2017 S&P+ top 20 is listed above.

The 2017 season was one of extreme parity, with few teams distinguishing themselves at a high level for the entire season. Ohio State was the best team in the country for about 12 of 14 games but put out a dud performance against Oklahoma and maybe the most surprisingly poor performance of the year against Iowa. The top nine teams in the country were a step or two ahead of the rest, but after that bunch, teams were dramatically up and down.

In terms of records, we didn't end up with many extreme outliers here. Louisville cracked the top 20 thanks to a hot streak late in the regular season, but the Cardinals were the only top-20 team with fewer than nine wins, and now they have to replace an all-time great at quarterback.

Who might be slated to rise in 2018 then?

Williams: Tom DiPace; Herbert: AP; Lewerke: Tom Lynn

MISSISSIPPI STATE

In 2016, after losing star quarterback Dak Prescott to the Dallas Cowboys, Mississippi State fell to 6–7 and 56th in S&P+, just one spot ahead of Michigan State. But with a roster that was full of mostly underclassmen, the Bulldogs rebounded nicely, winning eight of their first 11 games with quarterback Nick Fitzgerald behind center. Their losses had come only to the teams ranked second (Alabama), third (Georgia), and 10th (Auburn) in the year-end S&P+ rankings.

Fitzgerald got hurt late in the season, and MSU slipped up to Ole Miss before taking down Louisville in the TaxSlayer Bowl. Then, coach Dan Mullen left for Florida.

It's difficult to predict a team with a new head coach to take a healthy step forward, but if Joe Moorhead is up to the task, he inherits a robust cast of characters: Fitzgerald and backup Keytaon Thompson, running backs Aeris Williams and Kylin Hill, seven of the top nine receivers, four-and-a-half line starters, and almost the entire defensive two-deep. MSU was in the S&P+ top 20 before losing Fitzgerald, and with this level of returning talent, the Bulldogs were projected 14th in this year's initial projections. No pressure, Coach Moorhead.


Justin Herbert

OREGON

Oregon didn't qualify as a ratings outlier in 2017 — the Ducks went 7–6 with an understandable No. 47 final S&P+ ranking. But consider the effects of quarterback Justin Herbert's collarbone injury.

Herbert was injured in the fifth game of the season, a win over Cal that made the Ducks 4–1. At the time, they were up to 26th in the S&P+ rankings after finishing 2016 at 74th. When he returned after missing five games, they were 5–5 and 59th. After he engineered a 20-point win over Arizona and a 59-point win over Oregon State, they were back to 39th, before a dud of a bowl loss to Boise State.

Oregon's defense improved from bad to average in 2017, and with Herbert and his band of fellow sophomores — receivers Dillon Mitchell and Brenden Schooler, tight end Jacob Breeland and three starting offensive linemen — the offense showed major upside. This year, the Ducks must replace two backs (Royce Freeman and Kani Benoit) who rushed for a combined 2,000 yards, but if a solid rusher emerges, and one usually does in Eugene, then the two-deep could have enough quality pieces to ignite a return to the top 25.


Brian Lewerke

MICHIGAN STATE

Mark Dantonio's Spartans arrived back on the scene a year ahead of schedule.

Michigan State had face-planted to 3–9 and 57th in S&P+ in 2016, and then the Spartans dealt with an offseason of turmoil and roster attrition. But a young squad surged back to 10–3 and 21st last fall, beating Penn State and Michigan and losing to teams that combined to go 32–8. And now they return almost everybody.

Sparty got aggressive again in 2017, and it worked out pretty well. Michigan State's defense went from allowing a 39.5 percent success rate (49th in FBS) to 36.0 percent (15th). The Spartans' havoc rate — tackles for a loss, passes defensed and forced fumbles divided by total plays — rebounded from 12.8 percent (110th) to 16.9 percent (49th) as well.

This accomplished two things: First, it resulted in more three-and-outs, which aided in the field position battle. MSU's field position margin went from minus-2.0 yards per possession (97th) to plus-4.4 (16th). The aggression also resulted in more takeaways. The Spartans forced a paltry 13 turnovers in 2016 (112th) but rebounded to 23 (37th) last fall.

And now MSU returns virtually every contributor from last year's defense — four of the top five defensive linemen, four of five linebackers and every primary defensive back. In February's initial S&P+ projections, this high level of returning production was the catalyst for a No. 11 ranking. Granted, the Spartans might struggle to improve much on last year's 10-win output, but the odds of sustained improvement are high.

OHIO STATE


J.K. Dobbins

It probably isn't smart to declare a team coming off of a 12-win season as one "on the rise," is it? There's not exactly a lot of room to improve. But the Buckeyes were better than they got credit for being last year.

Urban Meyer's squad must replace longtime starting quarterback J.T. Barrett, but sophomore blue-chipper Dwayne Haskins passed his audition when Barrett was hurt against Michigan, and he gets to work with a loaded backfield, all of last year's wideouts and a couple of all-conference performers on the line. Defensively, end Nick Bosa and corners Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield will anchor a unit that is as talented as ever.

Efficiency is the thing teams are most in control of in football — even if you're really good at making big plays, you still don't know for sure when they're going to come. The teams best at gaining five or six yards at a time are the most reliable, and nobody nailed the efficiency game like Ohio State in 2017. The Buckeyes' 50.3 percent offensive success rate ranked third in the country; on defense, they allowed a 35.7 percent success rate (14th).

This created a success rate margin of plus-14.6 percentage points, tops in FBS. The run game was the primary source of the offensive efficiency, and the return of backs J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber should assure a high level of consistency for Haskins or whoever wins the starting job. Barrett became a bit of a security blanket for Meyer at times, and now that's gone, but with that level of efficiency, the Buckeyes could probably afford to take a few more risks and live to tell the tale.

Technically, the Buckeyes aren't a team on the rise, because they're already near the top of their game. But you might be underestimating them all the same.


Cam Akers

FLORIDA STATE

The three components of the preseason S&P+ projections are recent history (not just last year, but the previous half-decade, weighted for recency), recent recruiting and returning production. Projections using these factors tell us what we already assume: The Noles aren't going to be down for long.

FSU fell into a brief pit of despair in 2017, as an early season quarterback injury and a bit of coaching complacency led to a 7–6 finish, the Seminoles' worst since 2009, Bobby Bowden's final year in charge. Jimbo Fisher left for Texas A&M in search of renewed energy (and guaranteed money), and Willie Taggart took over.

The Noles have recent history, recruiting and returning production all working in their favor. They have been mainstays on recruiting top-10 lists; they averaged 12 wins per year in the five seasons before 2017; and they now return two starting QBs, a blue-chip sophomore at running back, two of the top three wideouts and most of their offensive line. Defensive turnover could prevent them from becoming a top-10 team again just yet, but their time outside of college football's top tier will likely be brief.

Dobbins: Tom Lynn; Petrino: John Sommers II; Leach: Peter Brouillet; Akers, Rhule: AP



Matt Rhule

BAYLOR

Sometimes programs collapse and don't rebound. Baylor's conference mate Kansas is a good example: The Jayhawks averaged nearly eight wins per year in Mark Mangino's last five years in charge but haven't topped three in a season since he was let go in 2009.

Baylor is unlikely to follow Kansas' lead, and not only because head coach Matt Rhule's résumé is a little more sturdy than that of initial Mangino replacement Turner Gill. According to the 247Sports Composite, Rhule signed the fourth-best recruiting class in the Big 12 and the 30th-best overall. Recruiting is steady, and obviously recent history still says pretty nice things about Baylor.

The Bears also return a ton from last year's extreme youth movement. Baylor was led by a freshman quarterback, a freshman running back, four sophomore receivers and a defense loaded with freshmen and sophomores. The growing pains associated with this were the primary reason for their 1–11 collapse. Plus, four of their losses were by a touchdown or less. All signs point to a 2018 rebound, likely followed by another step forward in 2019.

Teams on the DECLINE

USC Despite winning the Pac-12 in 2017, Clay Helton's Trojans ranked a disappointing 26th in S&P+. Two of their three losses were by hefty margins (by 17 to Ohio State and by 35 to Notre Dame), and their wins included one-possession victories over mediocre Texas (50th in S&P+) and UCLA (77th) teams. Now the Trojans must replace their leading quarterback, running back and receiver. They were lucky to come away with 11 wins in 2017, and it will take a star turn at QB for them to threaten to match that total this year.



Louisville Under Charlie Strong and then Bobby Petrino, Louisville has won at least eight games for each of the last six seasons. That streak might get a stiff challenge this season as the Cardinals not only look to replace record-setting quarterback Lamar Jackson but also break in a third defensive coordinator in as many seasons — former Georgia, Auburn and Notre Dame DC Brian VanGorder.

VanGorder hasn't been in charge of a truly strong college defense in quite a while, and he might struggle to engineer much improvement in 2018 with a unit that must replace two of four defensive linemen, three of five linebackers and four of five defensive backs. And new quarterback Jawon Pass faces an impossibly high bar in succeeding Jackson. Has Petrino been recruiting well enough to handle this much turnover without a drop-off?

Washington State Mike Leach lost his last two games of the year by a combined 52 points, then lost his starting quarterback, his leading rusher, his leading receiver, an All-America offensive lineman, an All-America defensive lineman and three of his top four linebackers.

Oh yeah, and he also lost about half his assistant coaches, including a defensive coordinator (Alex Grinch) who brought life to a previously lifeless unit. And he had to deal with the awkwardness of allegedly accepting an offer for another job (the Tennessee vacancy) before seeing the offer retracted and returning to Pullman.



After winning 26 games in three seasons, it feels like a tall ask for the Cougars to avoid a decent-sized drop-off this fall.

Editors Roundtable



Which team not in our preseason top 10 has the best chance to make the College Football Playoff?

→ **MITCH LIGHT:** This is far from a vintage Florida State team, but it wouldn't shock me if the Seminoles jumped back into the national discussion in Year 1 of the Willie Taggart era. The schedule is not kind — the Noles play both Miami and Virginia Tech from the ACC Coastal and also have road games at NC State and Notre Dame — but few teams nationally will have more talent than Florida State.

→ **BRADEN GALL:** This question is entirely about talent and upside meshing with a clear path to the Playoff. Texas is my pick because the Big 12 champion will have a good opportunity to get into the Playoff, and the Longhorns could have a high-quality non-conference win as USC comes to town early in the season. If the quarterback position stabilizes, Texas could still lose a league game and make a surprise trip to the four-team tournament.

→ **STEVEN LASSAN:** This is sort of a cop-out answer, but I'm going to take the Big Ten tandem just outside of our top 10 in Michigan State and Penn State. The Big Ten has five teams ranked inside of our top 12 for 2018, and the winner of this conference should be in the mix for a playoff spot. Ohio State takes the Big Ten title in our projections, but Penn State and Michigan State aren't far behind. The Spartans were a bit fortunate last year, winning five games by one score. However, Michigan State returns its depth chart nearly intact from last season. Penn State has to replace Saquon Barkley, but coach James Franklin is collecting elite talent in Happy Valley, so the drop-off should be minimal.

What about teams not in our top 25? Which one do you think has a chance to make the Playoff?

→ **GALL**: Again, this is all about a path to the title game. Which division can be won with a good season and one big upset? How about Khalil Tate and Arizona in the Pac-12 South? The Cats have a manageable non-conference schedule, get USC at home and avoid both Stanford and Washington from the North. Arizona could easily find itself in the Pac-12 title game and one win away from the Playoff.

→ **LIGHT:** I'm with Braden on this one. The Pac-12 South is wide open. Why not Arizona? Khalil Tate is one of the nation's most exciting talents, and he's playing for a new coaching staff that will tailor its offense to take advantage of what he does best. The Cats' schedule isn't overly taxing either; they don't play Washington or Stanford from the Pac-12 North.

→ **LASSAN:** This is a big long shot, but I'll take Utah. With USC breaking in a new quarterback, along with coaching transitions at Arizona, Arizona State and UCLA, the door is open for Utah to win the South Division for the first time in program history. The schedule sets up in the Utes' favor. An early matchup against Washington in Salt Lake City could be a preview of the Pac-12 Championship, and Oregon, Arizona and USC also visit Rice-Eccles Stadium.

Which top-10 team scares you the most? Which team do you think we might have over-ranked?

→ **LASSAN:** I don't think Auburn is significantly over-ranked, but I could see coach Gus Malzahn's team slipping just outside of the top 10. Quarterback Jarrett Stidham is one of the best in the SEC, and he's surrounded by a capable group of playmakers on the outside. However, the offensive line will be revamped after losing four starters — as well as position coach Herb Hand, who went to Texas. That's a huge concern with matchups against Washington, Mississippi State, Georgia, LSU and Alabama.

→ **LIGHT:** Miami. The Canes were one of the surprise teams in the nation in 2017, winning their first 10 games and climbing to the No. 2 spot in the CFB Playoff Rankings. This was a good team, but it was also a team that won a bunch of close games and was probably never as good as its ranking. Then, after losing their final three games, the Canes ended the season ranked No. 13 in the final AP poll. They should be better this season, but until Mark Richt figures out the QB situation — will it be Malik Rosier or N'Kosi Perry? — it's fair to question whether this is a legit top-10 team.

→ **GALL:** It's hard to pick the most talented team in a league that consistently wins at an elite level with an elite coach, but Ohio State is my choice. The Buckeyes may or may not have a replacement for quarterback J.T. Barrett and definitely have one of the toughest league schedules in the country. They could be really good, win the Big Ten and still miss the playoff because of multiple losses.

Who was the best hire of the offseason?

→ **LIGHT:** It has to be Scott Frost. There were other very good hires — Dan Mullen at Florida and Chip Kelly at UCLA are the next in line — but Nebraska needed Frost more than those two schools needed their new coaches. I don't think we will see a return to the glory years of the 1990s, but I'd be surprised if Nebraska does not become nationally relevant under Frost's watch in the next few years.

→ **GALL:** There is no answer to this question. Or there are two. Scott Frost is the most perfect fit at a major power college football program since Michigan landed Jim Harbaugh. But Chip Kelly is the easily the best coach hired this offseason. Both deserve superlative recognition, and no other hire is even in the same stratosphere as these two guys.

→ **LASSAN:** Scott Frost is the right answer here, but Florida's hire of Dan Mullen isn't far behind. For a program that has a track record of innovative offenses in recent years and has no trouble attracting skill talent, it's surprising to see the Gators rank eighth or worse in the SEC in scoring offense every year since 2010. That should change under Mullen's watch, as he established a strong track record of developing quarterbacks and successful offenses at Mississippi State. During his tenure with the Bulldogs, Mullen won 69 games, led the program to a No. 1 ranking in the 2014 CFB Playoff standings and guided the program to eight bowl appearances. With more resources and better talent at his disposal, Florida should return to contending for SEC East titles under Mullen's watch.



Which coach is under the most pressure in 2018?

→ **LIGHT:** Kliff Kingsbury at Texas Tech. He was my choice last year as well. He was living on the edge last season and probably would not have been retained had the Raiders not rallied to win in Austin in the final weekend of the regular season to get to six wins. Texas Tech is 16–29 in the Big 12 under Kingsbury's watch and has not finished higher than a tie for fifth place. That's just not good enough.

→ **GALL:** It may be a bit strange to see a first-year head coach on a list of guys with the most pressure on them, but Jimbo Fisher finds himself in an unusual situation at Texas A&M. The school's administration didn't spend more than the GDP of Micronesia on a national championship-winning coach and facilities to finish in fifth place in the SEC West. Fisher has the pedigree, a pretty decent roster and an expensive coaching staff, so results will be required quickly in College Station.

→ **LASSAN:** Ed Orgeron isn't necessarily on the hot seat, but LSU's preseason expectations are the lowest since 2000, and there are more personnel question marks surrounding this team than in recent years. Orgeron needs to prove that this program is on stable ground and not regressing significantly.



What was the most puzzling hire?

→ **LIGHT:** Herm Edwards. I've been at *Athlon Sports* for 17 years and have written about the new coaches in the magazine every year, and I have never been more perplexed by a hire than Arizona State's decision to hire Edwards. It might work out great for the Sun Devils, but that doesn't make the hire less puzzling.

→ **LASSAN:** Herm Edwards at Arizona State. Athletic director Ray Anderson's proposal of pushing Arizona State to change the dynamic in the Pac-12 South and experiment with a new organizational structure to close the gap with the rest of the conference isn't a bad idea. However, I'm not sure hiring a coach who hasn't spent time at the collegiate level since 1989 is the way to do it. Todd Graham went 46–32 with a Pac-12 South Division title and five bowl berths over six years. It's hard to see Edwards coming close to that total. This move has the look of a gamble that could flop in a big way.

→ **GALL:** Greg Schiano. No, Dave Doeren. Wait, it's Jeremy Pruitt. A guy who was likely outside the top-15 candidates when the search started is now the head coach at Tennessee, one of the winningest and most financially successful football programs in the nation. He might be just the right blend of coaching talent and work ethic — or could he have no idea what it takes to be a big-time SEC head coach at a powerhouse institution.

Editors Roundtable

Name a dark horse Heisman candidate.

→ **LIGHT:** AJ Dillon, Boston College. It would take an incredible run by Boston College for Dillon to get into the discussion, but there is no doubt that he is one of the best running backs in the country. I will let an ACC assistant coach make my case: "I can remember at one point, our coaches were laughing when watching game tape of Dillon. Not laughing at him, laughing at how ridiculously good he is."



→ **GALL:** D'Andre Swift at Georgia. Not many teams can lose sure-fire All-America-type players like Nick Chubb and Sony Michel and not really miss a beat. Swift was a stellar third back and looks to be the next first-round draft pick to roll off the Georgia tailback assembly line. He averaged 7.6 yards per carry, posted 771 yards from scrimmage as a third-stringer and had a career day in the SEC Championship Game win over Auburn.

→ **LASSAN:** Willie Taggart has produced a 1,000-yard rusher in seven of his eight seasons as a head coach. That's good news for Florida State running back Cam Akers. As a true freshman, Akers led the team with 1,024 yards and seven scores. Even though Akers is likely to share time with Jacques Patrick, he could put up enough numbers in Taggart's "Gulf Coast Offense" to jump onto the Heisman radar.

Name a coordinator hire that you like.

→ **LASSAN:** Mike Elko at Texas A&M. The Aggies thought John Chavis would turn their defense back into the Wrecking Crew, but those hopes never materialized over the last three years. Expect the Aggies to take a significant step forward on defense with Elko at the controls in 2018.

→ **GALL:** It's not officially a coordinator, but Michigan landing Jim McElwain to help develop the offense in Ann Arbor was a big win for the program. Jim Harbaugh has a talented staff around him and a talented roster to work with, but McElwain has proven to be a masterful offensive coordinator in the past — see Alabama's game plan against LSU in the BCS national title game — and could be the missing piece for the Wolverines.

→ **LIGHT:** Elko is probably the "best" hire. I'm going to answer this question a bit differently. I'm most intrigued by Ricky Rahne at Penn State. Rahne has been with James Franklin since Franklin took over at Vanderbilt in 2011. He was passed over for the coordinator post two years ago after John Donovan was fired in favor of Joe Moorhead. That obviously turned out to be a great decision by Franklin. Now, with Moorhead off to Mississippi State, Franklin has turned to Rahne to call the plays for the first time in his coaching career. Expectations are very high for that offense even with Saquon Barkley no longer around. There will be pressure on Rahne and the offensive staff to maintain the production.

Name a breakout player.



→ **GALL:** Brian Lewerke at Michigan State. He has all of the physical tools to be the difference maker in a ridiculously loaded division. He's on a team that returns nearly its entire starting lineup and has already caught the eye of the NFL scouts with his overall athletic ability and arm talent. Lewerke will have multiple chances on the national stage to break out in 2018.

→ **LASSAN:** I'll take Dylan Moses from Alabama. C.J. Mosley, Reggie Ragland and Reuben Foster are just a few of the standouts Nick Saban has produced at linebacker, and Moses looks like the next star in Tuscaloosa. He ranked as a five-star prospect in the 2017 signing class and saw immediate playing time. In 11 contests, Moses recorded 30 tackles (5.5 for a loss), 1.5 sacks and a forced fumble.

→ **LIGHT:** Deebo Samuel at South Carolina. Samuel was off to a great start last season — he scored six touchdowns in three games — before going down with an injury. He is a wide receiver by trade but is also a threat to run the ball and is a huge weapon on special teams.

Who is the most VALUABLE player in the country?

→ **LASSAN:** West Virginia was 7-3, with all three defeats by 11 points or fewer, with Will Grier at the controls but stumbled to 0-3 with Grier sidelined by a finger injury. If the QB stays healthy and West Virginia's offense picks up where it left off prior to his injury, a trip to the Big 12 Championship Game isn't out of the question.

→ **GALL:** Justin Herbert. And I'm not even sure it's close. The Ducks were 6-2 with Herbert as the starter and 1-4 without him. In the four losses when Herbert didn't play quarterback for Oregon, it scored a grand total of 34 points. With a new coaching staff, the playmaking quarterback will be an even more valuable piece of the puzzle this fall.

→ **LIGHT:** I will pick Trace McSorley at Penn State. With a new offensive coordinator and without Saquon Barkley, a lot will be on McSorley's shoulders this fall. The Nittany Lions' No. 2 quarterback, Tommy Stevens, has attempted 30 passes in his career. This offense could take a big step back if McSorley goes down.



Who is a true freshman you think will have a big impact?

→ **LASSAN:** I'm intrigued by two quarterbacks — Adrian Martinez of Nebraska and Trevor Lawrence of Clemson — but I think cornerback Patrick Surtain is going to be the top impact freshman of 2018. Surtain joins an Alabama secondary that lost all four starters from last season, including standout safety Minkah Fitzpatrick. With playing time up for grabs, it's a safe bet that Surtain — the five-star prospect from Florida — is going to see time right away and likely end up as a starter by the end of the 2018 season.

→ **LIGHT:** Trevor Lawrence at Clemson. Kelly Bryant did a commendable job in his first season as the Tigers' starter, but there is no doubt that Lawrence is the better overall player. I'm not sure how long it will take, but my guess is Lawrence will eventually take control of the Clemson offense.

→ **GALL:** Which true freshman will start in the City of Angels? JT Daniels will have an uphill battle to start at USC, so I will go with Dorian Thompson-Robinson at UCLA. The highly touted dual threat from famed Bishop Gorman High School in Las Vegas is the perfect fit for Chip Kelly's offense in Los Angeles. He's a star in the making and should be starting for the Bruins before too long.

Name three Group of 5 head coaches who will be in Power 5 jobs next season.



→ **LASSAN:** Neal Brown of Troy. Seth Littrell of North Texas. Scott Satterfield of Appalachian State.

→ **GALL:** For the second year in a row, Bryan Harsin definitely has to be on this list. I'll also add Neal Brown of Troy and Blake Anderson of Arkansas State.

→ **LIGHT:** Neal Brown of Troy. Seth Littrell of North Texas. Jason Candle of Toledo.

What is the most intriguing non-conference game?

→ **GALL:** Michigan at Notre Dame in Week 1. What's not to like? It's got rich history, impeccable prestige and two larger-than-life coaches carrying two top-20 teams into a season where both fanbases are demanding success. It's one of the most aesthetically pleasing college football matchups ever assembled.

→ **LASSAN:** Michigan at Notre Dame in Week 1. It doesn't get much better than two teams with College Football Playoff aspirations playing in South Bend to start the season.

→ **LIGHT:** Auburn vs. Washington in Atlanta in Week 1. It's a huge game for both teams (obviously), but it's also a big game for the Pac-12. The league can earn some national respect if its best team travels across the country and knocks off the defending SEC West champs.



Give us a program on the rise.

→ **LASSAN:** I wouldn't expect a Big Ten West Division title in 2018, but Nebraska is clearly going in the right direction with Scott Frost at the controls. The Cornhuskers now have a clear direction on offense, along with a coach who understands the culture and what it takes to win in Lincoln.

→ **GALL:** Florida. Even as he was winning back-to-back SEC East titles, Jim McElwain never seemed to win over the fan base. Now, with Dan Mullen in charge, the Gator faithful finally believe this program can return to its spot among the elite in college football. Mullen is an elite coach who will have his program contending for Playoff spots in the near future.

→ **LIGHT:** I'm not sure what Iowa State's ceiling is, but I'm confident the Cyclones will be a factor in the Big 12 as long as Matt Campbell is at the school.

What about a program on the decline?



→ **GALL:** LSU. While I am openly rooting for Coach O to succeed, he hasn't proven that he is capable of winning at a high level in Power 5 football. So the Tigers have questions at head coach and massive unknowns at quarterback (sound familiar?) as well as an offensive coordinator who feels like a Les Miles clone. With a roster that simply does not seem up to LSU standards and a brutal schedule, getting to a bowl game might be considered a solid season.

→ **LASSAN:** LSU. It might be premature to put LSU in this space, but this program seems to be headed in the wrong direction compared to the rest of the SEC West.

→ **LIGHT:** Can I say Illinois again? No? Okay. How about Washington State? It's never safe to bet against Mike Leach, but it just seems like there isn't much positive momentum in Pullman right now. It's been well documented that Leach was interested in taking the Tennessee job — and that's never a good thing when news like that becomes public. Also, several key members of the coaching staff are gone, none more notable than defensive coordinator Alex Grinch.

Coordinators Roundtable

Head coaches usually get the lion's share of the credit when things go well (and the blame when they don't), but coordinators are often the brains of the operation, charged with directing the team's strategy on a play-to-play basis and reacting instantaneously to what the other team is doing. *Athlon Sports* gathered 15 of the nation's best offensive and defensive play callers and picked their sizable football brains on topics ranging from the nuts and bolts of their jobs to college football's big-picture issues.

What is one rule you would like to see changed that would make your job easier?

→ **ARANDA:** No official visits in the spring and summer. That'd be great. ... There are times where you're doing your plan for the first game or you want to do a study on a team, and that kind of gets hampered because a kid's coming down. That kind of gets disrupted.

→ **SCALLEY:** The rule that linemen can be three yards downfield and it still be an eligible pass. It makes the [run-pass option] stuff that much more of a problem for defensive coordinators. Ineligible men downfield makes the play-action pass game more manageable from a defensive perspective.



→ **SHOOP:** One of the biggest issues in college football today is the length of the game and the number of snaps. To me, if we went more to the pro style of timing, where the clock was always running. The pro game, the average offense has between 55 and 65 plays. In college, it's between 75 and 85. From a player-safety perspective and a length-of-game standpoint, I think we need to look at some of these things. And I think a simple way to do it is with the timing aspect. Keeping the clock running more.

→ **DIAZ:** I want to see the targeting rule so it's split into two. Like a Flagrant 1 and a Flagrant 2. So the real intent, the real launching intent, is punishable, whether you're kicked out in the first half or the second half and miss part of the following game. But the more in-the-nature-of-the-game type thing is penalized differently.

→ **LINDGREN:** Having the linemen be able to block a little more downfield on passes, in the RPO run game.

→ **LUDWIG:** I would like more time to work with the players in the offseason.

→ **MAZZONE:** The coach-to-quarterback communication. I'd like the NFL style where you have the phone going into the QB's helmet.

The Coordinators

Dave Aranda, defensive coordinator, LSU
Mike DeBord, offensive coordinator, Indiana
Manny Diaz, defensive coordinator, Miami (Fla.)
D.J. Eliot, defensive coordinator, Colorado
Danny Gonzales, defensive coordinator, Arizona State
Rob Likens, offensive coordinator, Arizona State
Brian Lindgren, offensive coordinator, Oregon State
Andy Ludwig, offensive coordinator, Vanderbilt
Tee Martin, offensive coordinator, USC
Noel Mazzone, offensive coordinator, Arizona
Morgan Scalley, defensive coordinator, Utah
Bob Shoop, defensive coordinator, Mississippi State
Jake Spavital, offensive coordinator, West Virginia
Troy Taylor, offensive coordinator, Utah
Tim Tibesar, defensive coordinator, Oregon State

→ **MARTIN:** As a receivers coach and coordinator, I'd say the [pass] interference call. I think it should be a spot foul like in the NFL. If you pull my receiver down 50 yards downfield, it shouldn't be a 15-yard penalty. It should be a 50-yard penalty.



→ **GONZALES:** Recruiting restrictions. There are so many rules you have to watch out for. There are so many nitpicking things going on — you can say "Hi" to a senior but you can't say "Hi" to a junior. You could eliminate so many rules that they can't really keep track of.

→ **LIKENS:** I think they are too stringent on the cut blocking rules. You used to be able to cut anywhere on the field. Now you can't cut backside, you can't cut kicking a guy out. You've got to be faced up on him, 10 and 2, all that stuff. I liked the old rules better.

→ **TIBESAR:** I'd like to see them go back to where the offensive line can't use their hands anymore. That would make my job easier. Back in the day, remember the offensive line had to block with their elbows out.

Who is the best player you have faced?



→ **ARANDA:** **Lamar Jackson** would be one. As a college football player, he's scary. [Ohio State QB] Braxton Miller would be up there, too, as far as being dominant in college. Lamar would do it more skill-based, where Braxton would have a little more grit to it. But both of those guys, when it came down to it, they wanted the ball in their hands.



→ **ELIOT:** **Dak Prescott** at Mississippi State. He could throw as well as any quarterback, could make decisions as well as any quarterback but also could run as well as any quarterback. He had accuracy, great decision making and was athletic.

→ **LINDGREN:** No. 94 at USC, [defensive tackle] Leonard Williams. I remember we had to make a bunch of protection adjustments for him. He created a lot of issues.

→ **MARTIN:** Jadaveon Clowney at South Carolina. Him and [Georgia LB] Justin Houston.

→ **SCALLEY:** [Former USC WR] JuJu Smith-Schuster. Or [former Oregon QB] Marcus Mariota.



→ **SPAVITAL:** I'd want to say the entire Alabama defense. You can go **Jonathan Allen**. He was a freak. Minkah Fitzpatrick, he was phenomenal. I thought Cyrus Jones was phenomenal. I thought Ha-Ha Clinton Dix was phenomenal. If I had to choose, Jonathan Allen's probably the best one. Robert Nkemdiche at Ole Miss is another one who stands out.

→ **DIAZ:** Probably Robert Griffin III his last year at Baylor. He had the ability to run and throw, and their ability to stretch the field. His skill set, he was a major problem.

→ **SHOOP:** [Virginia Tech QB] Michael Vick.

→ **TAYLOR:** [Washington State DL] Hercules Mata'afa.



→ **DEBORD:** He wasn't an opposing player and yet he was, in some ways, but going against **Charles Woodson** every day in practice at Michigan, I saw some of the most amazing plays ever by an individual. I really learned a lot by studying him every day, how he played the position. He wasn't really an opponent, but yet he was because our offense had to go against the defense all the time. He was an exceptional player.



→ **MAZZONE:** That kid at Tennessee [DE **Derek Barnett**]. Going up against UCLA in practice, Anthony Barr and Eric Kendricks. The entire front seven at Alabama.



→ **TIBESAR:** **Sam Bradford**, the quarterback at Oklahoma when I was coaching at Kansas State. That offense they had was phenomenal.



→ **LIKENS:** [Former Miami safety] **Sean Taylor**. When I was at Temple, he was at Miami, and he had my receivers scared to death.



→ **LUDWIG:** **Joey Bosa** at Ohio State. Great athleticism and a great motor. Excellent football player.

Shoop: Kelly Price/ MSU Athletic Communications; Gonzales: Sun Devil Athletics; Taylor: AP; Other Players: Athlon Sports Archives

Who is the best opposing coordinator you have faced in your career?



→ **ARANDA:** **Lane Kiffin**. I've lost to Lane multiple times. What makes him special is he looks at what plays hurt you, and he's able to pull those out. And he has good timing for it. You have to do a real good job on your self-scout to get a good feeling for what he's seeing and how he's going to attack, because the self-scout is so much more important than the opponent scout when you're playing him. So it's a big challenge, and on top of that, he has a good feel for setting up stuff and calling stuff.

→ **ELIOT:** Steve Spurrier. He just knew his system so well. Throughout the game, he'd figure out what you were doing and how to attack you.

→ **SHOOP:** Hugh Freeze is a good play caller. Jim Chaney is a good play caller. I'll go with Josh Heupel. I really respect the job that he did at Missouri the last two years.

→ **DEBORD:** I always thought what Coach [Nick] Saban does defensively, no matter who his coordinator was at the time — when I was at Tennessee, it was Kirby [Smart] — and I always thought that scheme was very good, kept you off balance. And then a scheme is sometimes only as good as the players, and they had great players who played exceptionally well within the scheme. I always thought he was hard to go against. I went against him when he was at Alabama and also when he was at Michigan State when I was at Michigan, so I had a lot of experience against him.

→ **DIAZ:** I always thought Bobby Petrino did a great job with his offenses. Dan Enos did a great job at Arkansas. There's been a bunch. Once you start thinking about one, you leave out some other guys. But some of those Petrino offenses at Louisville were really well put together.

→ **TIBESAR:** Urban Meyer. He's not really the coordinator, but I've had to face Coach Meyer three times and unfortunately haven't been able to get a W on him yet.

→ **LINDGREN:** There's been a lot. I have a great deal of respect for Pete Kwiatkowski at Washington. Those guys have done a nice job against me in my career.

→ **MAZZONE:** Everyone I can't score points on! I always have thought Clancy Pendergast at USC was tough. Jeremy Pruitt was tough at Alabama, but they also have some really good players over there. That helps. When I was at UCLA, Derek Mason was a real tough one to go against.

→ **MARTIN:** Nick Saban and Kirby Smart at Alabama. They were just sound and didn't make a lot of mistakes.

→ **GONZALES:** In my 20 years of coaching football, any time you go against a triple-option team — Ken Niumatalolo at Navy — on the chalkboard, you can't beat them. They are going to have a free blocker every time. I think the triple option is the greatest offense ever invented. At a school like this, if you tried to run it, you'd never sell any tickets. I wouldn't want to defend it every day in practice. When you get into the spread stuff, I think Mike Leach is as good of an offensive mind as there is.

→ **SCALLEY:** The one who has given us the most fits is probably Rich Rodriguez. I assume he was heading up their offense, but the QB run game that he's had — he did such a great job with the run game. It was really good and caused us fits.

How much communication during the game do you have with your head coach?

→ **ARANDA:** We talk before the game about a plan and what we think is going to happen and what we think our answers will be, kind of in anticipation of what's to come. And at halftime, we talk again with the defense. Those two times for sure, and during the game, if there's a timeout, we'll have a talk about what we're doing and thinking, just to get on the same page.

→ **LUDWIG:** We have very good communications in-game relating to situational football. It's very good. Good communication.

→ **ELIOT:** Quite a bit. We're on the same page with the philosophy and situational football.

→ **SPAVITAL:** Really not much. Dana [Holgorsen] has been really good on understanding, because he was a play caller. And he didn't like to get messed with when he was a play caller, so he tries to stay away from me as much as he can.

→ **TIBESAR:** During the course of a game, there's pretty limited communication. More so situational than down-to-down play calling. They'd be communicating with me: "Hey, the offense is going to go for it on fourth down, have the defense ready to go."

→ **DIAZ:** Mark [Richt] is busy with the whole offense, but he's on our headset when we're out on the field defensively, and he and I will have some conversations over the course of the game. Every now and then, he'll ask me a question or so, but that's probably the extent of it.

→ **LINDGREN:** It will be a new experience for me working with [new Oregon State head coach Jonathan Smith]. With Coach [Mike] MacIntyre at Colorado, he'd always been on with the offensive side. Most of the feedback and talking was in between series with him, giving his thoughts like, "Hey, we need to get this player involved some more. Or we need to attack this or that. We needed to get the ball down the field." There would be things of that nature.

Kiffin: Wesley Hitt; Martin: USC Athletics; Diaz: Eric Espada/ UM Athletics



→ MARTIN: Some. Clay [Helton], having been a former offensive coordinator, is over the headset some. I don't like a lot of voices in my head. There are times I don't even have the headset on and people may be talking and I don't hear them because I need to be in my own head. Then there are times, at halftime or after a series, when I will listen to people. But then I got to get into my own thoughts. But Clay does talk, and he might have suggestions. There are times when he might call two or three plays a game, which is his right as the head coach. But we have a good chemistry.

→ TAYLOR: He is on the headset when we have the ball. Coach [Kyle Whittingham] will communicate if we will go for it or kick. Information he gives is concise and pertinent. He allows me to focus and call the game. I love it.

→ GONZALES: With Rocky Long at San Diego State, he was on our headsets the whole time. I think it will be very similar with Herm Edwards. But Coach Edwards isn't a micromanager. He lets people do their jobs. I think he'll be on our headsets 90 percent of the game, but I invite and look forward to having him. The knowledge he has? You can't replace that.

→ LIKENS: Every head coach is different. Some coaches stay on there and are like Keith Jackson, giving you a play-by-play on everything. Some coaches don't say a word to you until after the series is over. With Coach Herm, he's told me "The only thing I'll ever say is 'Go for it' or 'Let's punt it' or 'I'll talk to you between series.' "

→ SCALLEY: Quite a bit. [Kyle Whittingham] is a defensive guy, and I like to pick his brain. He lets call the game as I see fit, but I'd be an idiot if I didn't utilize his experience.

What is the easiest position to recruit to?

→ SHOOP: Probably safety. There are a lot of high school DBs out there who think they are corners but a significant amount get moved to safety. And you can do a lot of different things with that body type — the tall, athletic guys who are long corners who might not be able to make it at corner in college, you can move them to play safety. And then you can recruit some safety-types that you can move to linebacker against some spread offenses. You can find enough guys to handle it.



→ DIAZ: From an evaluation standpoint, it might be linebacker, just because they're always going to be involved in whatever is going on in every play.

→ MAZZONE: The easiest for me is quarterbacks. That's because I know those guys, and I've got a good feel for them and I've had a chance to be around a lot of them. I kind of can talk the QB language.

→ SPAVITAL: The easiest is receivers because we've put up a lot of numbers. It's a very quarterback-, receiver-friendly offense, so that's always encouraging. We almost had three 1,000-yard receivers last year, so the kids all believe that they can come in and be a 1,000-yard receiver.

→ MARTIN: At USC, in Southern California, it's receivers and quarterbacks.

→ SCALLEY: To the University of Utah? Defensive tackle. We can get 'em here at home or on the islands.

→ GONZALES: Running back. Usually it's the best player on the team, the guy who you put the ball in his hands every time, so you get a chance to evaluate him. And those guys are so versatile — they can play other positions. If he's not good enough at running back, he can be a defensive back or a slot wideout.

What is the most difficult position to recruit to?

LUDWIG: The quarterback recruit is obviously the most critical, and getting the best guy, the ideal player for your university and your style of play is the biggest task in the recruiting process for us on offense.

SHOOP: I think everyone would say defensive line. In the SEC especially, it's a line of scrimmage league. You need to have big-time D-linemen, and that's not easy.

DIAZ: Defensive back, at times, would be the most difficult, because it's the hardest to find those guys on film, because they're not challenged very often. A lot of times, they're not even in the camera. And defensive tackle, because there's fewer of them than anybody in the country.

DEBORD: The quarterback position. When I was at Michigan a long time ago, we had five guys on scholarship and a guy might only play a couple years, might only start a couple years, but he prepared the other three years. Today, they don't want to sit too long. They want to play.

SPAVITAL: I'd probably say running backs are the hardest, just based off of how we're kind of seen as a team that throws it around a little bit.

LINDGREN: Offensive line. There's a handful of guys who are no-brainers, and then there's a big portion of guys who do some good things and you're trying to determine how this guy is going to translate to the next level — what is his upside going to look like. The really good offensive line coaches have a knack for that.

TIBESAR: Defensive line. They are the hardest to find — really big guys who can run. Everybody is looking for them, and everybody is going after the same guys.

MAZZONE: Probably for me the most difficult is DBs. You know, deep down in my heart I don't really like those guys.

GONZALES: Offensive linemen are the hardest to recruit. It takes special evaluation to recruit those guys successfully.

Offense Only

Do you script plays to start a game?

→ **LUDWIG:** Yes. It's a good, strong guideline that you draw from heavily in the first couple of series or the first quarter of the game, but you get off it if the opponent is throwing something a little different at you that you haven't quite seen on tape. You have to make some adjustments.



→ **MAZZONE:** No. I've got a call sheet of about 25 plays — basically openers. I don't script it; it's just 25 plays.

→ **MARTIN:** No.

→ **SPAVITAL:** I script my first three to five.

→ **TAYLOR:** No. But I have an idea of early calls that I will use in every situation.

→ **LIKENS:** Yes, you try to. But obviously you can get off script. Some guys will change their lineup in a way you didn't expect, and you have to come off [the script].

→ **LINDGREN:** Yep. We script the first 12 and then go from there. In past years, I've scripted as many as 30. I'll jump on it for situationals, third downs. It's kind of a guideline.

→ **DEBORD:** It's usually 13. Pick the unlucky number and try to make it lucky. I have really varied through the years. Sometimes I would pick 10, sometimes I'd pick 12, sometimes I might pick as high as 15 or whatever. Just here at Indiana, we talked about it and one of the coaches says, "Hey, let's take the unlucky number," so that's what we do now.



→ **MAZZONE:** I started this with Philip Rivers [at NC State]. I'd have a game plan on the white board and Philip would come in on Wednesday after class and without me in the room, he'd rank the plays in the game plan — 1 he loved and 10 he hated. Anything over about a 6, I took out of the game plan, unless I really loved it. Obviously I knew better than he did.

How much collaboration during the week is there with your quarterback?

→ **LUDWIG:** A lot. We have extensive collaboration with the quarterback.

→ **MARTIN:** It's very important. When I was a player, my communication with the coordinator was vital. Having that trust, that bond, that understanding of the expectations of the play. I meet with the quarterbacks on Thursdays and sometimes on Fridays to hear what they like, what they don't like and what they are comfortable with. Not only that, what they like called more. Sometimes you feel like you're calling something a lot but then your quarterback is like, "Coach, I want more of that."

→ **DEBORD:** I talk with Nick Sheridan, our QB coach, about the things that players liked and QBs liked, and then I also talk to the quarterbacks. I'll say, "Is there anything you don't like? What do you like better?" I feel like it's very important to have a great relationship with the quarterback so when you call a play, he loves that play and he's not thinking, "Oh, no, not that one."

→ **TAYLOR:** A lot. I want the QB to have the same understanding of our opponent and game plan as I do.

→ **SPAVITAL:** A lot. I do a lot of the game-planning with the staff on Monday and Tuesday, and [the quarterback] will bring in more open-field ideas to me, like anything he sees that he's comfortable with. I like to implement those in the game plan. And then later in the week, around Thursday, we go through the third-down list of what he's comfortable with and what he enjoys the most. Really all situations: red zone, score zone, goal line, third downs, and just get what he's comfortable with, so I collaborate a lot with them. I'm big on making sure that quarterback is as comfortable as possible.

→ **LIKENS:** A lot. More than what you think. I'm not going to call a play he doesn't feel comfortable with just because it looks good on the board. I'd rather call a play twice that he likes than call another one he's iffy on.

How many different plays on offense do you install for a game week?

→ **LUDWIG:** We carry approximately 80 to 90 plays per game. It's about the same throughout the season. Maybe a little less at the beginning of the year, a little more at the end.

→ **MAZZONE:** I'm going to say the max number of plays on the sheet — that includes red zone, third down, goal line, all that — is somewhere around 38 to 45 plays. We're not a big scheme offense as far as having different schemes for every game plan. We're more, don't change the play but change the presentation.

→ **LINDGREN:** I would say 70 to 80. Maybe a little less, 60-70.

→ **SPAVITAL:** We typically go in, probably overall, depending on who we're playing, anywhere from 75 to 100. It's a lot. You have a lot of those trick plays and special-situation plays that carry over week to week. I typically go in with around 30-35 open-field plays, and then you end up getting about five plays for every situation.

→ **MARTIN:** We're well over 100. Now, with Sam [Darnold], we were really extensive. But well over 100.

→ **TAYLOR:** We have a few new wrinkles each week. I really believe in running our concepts that we have in practices throughout the year. But we will disguise those concepts by mixing up the personnel and formation and shifts and motions that we use.

→ **LIKENS:** I would like to have three major runs, two auxiliary runs, three progression reads. You'll have basically two quick-game passes. And probably two half-field concepts. I'm not keeping count. Are you keeping count? You're probably going to take two bootlegs. Two play actions. Probably, at the most, you'll run three trick plays but usually two.

Mazzone: Arizona Athletics; Ludwig: Joe Howell/Vanderbilt Athletics; Scalley: University of Utah; Eliot: Colorado Athletics

Do you think defenses are catching up to the spread or Air Raid-type offenses?

→ **ELIOT:** I think so. We definitely know how to defend it better than when it first came out. The game of football goes in cycles. However many years you want to go, one offensive scheme is popular, then we figure out how to stop it and then they go back to the old scheme. Defenses are better against the spread now.

→ **SHOOP:** Yes and no. I think if you asked an offensive coordinator the question, they would say that it doesn't matter what the defense does because the theory behind the RPO and the spread offense now is two-fold: One, we have so many options within the framework of a single snap, whatever you do we are going to be in the right play. If you rotate a safety down to stop the run, there is a built-in pass to beat that situation. If you keep two high safeties to defend the pass, then we will run the ball. Defensive coordinators know what the plays are and have a decent idea how to defend them, but you have to make the decision to make a team beat you a certain way. Make them beat you by throwing the ball or make them beat you by running the ball. And if they are still good enough to beat you that way, then they are going to win.

→ **GONZALES:** Yes and no. You've got to give 90 percent of the credit [for innovation] to high school football coaches. Any new things in football come from high school football. They have to come up with so many fancy ways to be innovative on offense because they don't get to recruit. The spread, which was designed in high school, was almost impossible to stop. But I give Coach [Rocky] Long credit: What we did against the spread — and we're going to implement it here — the last few years is as good as anybody in the country.

→ **SCALLEY:** Yeah. I think there is progress every year. Whether or not you can say we've effectively stopped every spread offense, you can't say that. I do believe teams have gotten more equipped. Recruiting changes. I think you'll see this happen now that you're recruiting more mobile backers, maybe lighter defensive linemen. Now you're going to get teams like Stanford, that just pack the box and say, "OK, just go ahead and use your light linebackers and your light D-line and we'll pound the rock on you." It seems to be cyclical that way. I don't see [spread offenses] going away anytime soon, but teams have gotten better at knowing what are the weaknesses of a defense when facing a spread.



→ **DIAZ:** There's always a constant push-pull with offense and defense. I don't think anybody's ever gotten so far ahead or so far behind. Just the actual snaps over the course of the game has led to the fact that there's more yards and more points. If baseball went to 11 innings, I'd be surprised if runs and home runs and all that didn't go up. I don't think we'll ever go back to where we were, where a 300-yard day was a breakthrough for the offense. You're seeing the evolution of the trends come and go much faster, so something will come about and you'll see one team do it, and suddenly it will be everywhere, and as quick as it's here, it's gone. The trends of the game are moving very fast right now because everybody's got access to all the video and the information.

Would you rather face an elite drop-back passer who can't run or a mobile QB who struggles to throw the ball?



→ **ELIOT:** The drop-back passer. There are so many plays an athletic quarterback can make that you can't account for. When you play the drop-back passer, he may be able to throw it on a dime, but at least you can prepare for it. With an athletic quarterback, it comes down to, can your person tackle him or not.

→ **ARANDA:** Mobile quarterback. You can be a great mobile quarterback, but there's an element of team defense that you can implement to defend that. Whereas, if you've got a quarterback who can see pressure and he sees the tilt of the defense and he knows what the coverage is and he's throwing guys open, it's like, "What can we do?" It's almost a helpless feeling that comes with it.

→ **DIAZ:** I'd rather go against a mobile quarterback who struggles to throw. There's no defense for the perfectly thrown pass.

→ **TIBESAR:** A mobile quarterback who struggles to throw the ball. You can always put more guys in the box.

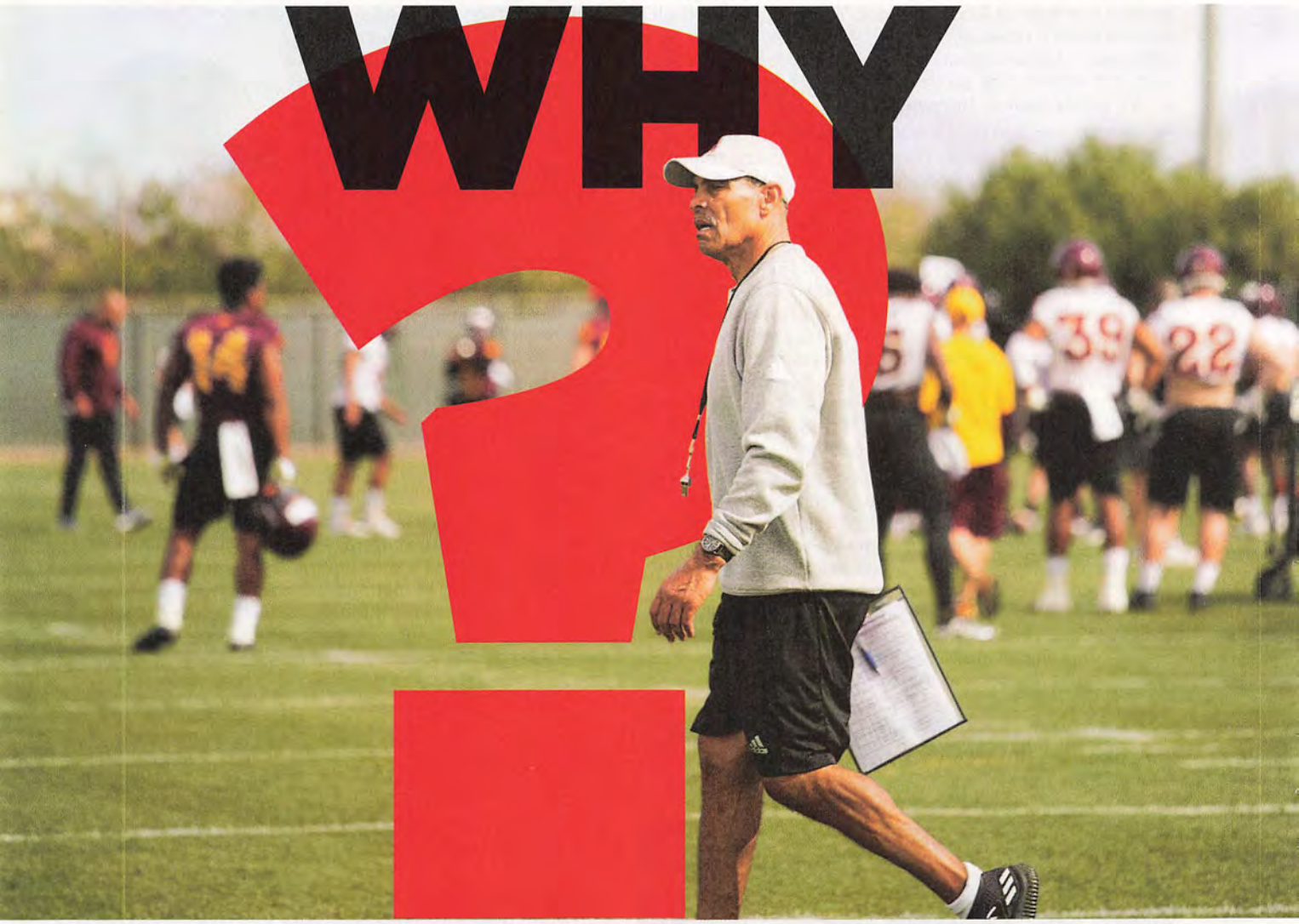
→ **SHOOP:** Elite drop-back passer who can't run. Every day. No question.

→ **GONZALES:** I would much rather go against a pocket passer, an elite quarterback who cannot scramble. We can design a bunch of defenses to get pressure on a quarterback, and we can cover them just long enough to get to him, so he's going to be like a sitting duck back there. An elite mobile guy? Those guys are scary. You miss one tackle and — like Arizona's Khalil Tate — he's going to take it 80 yards for a touchdown.

→ **SCALLEY:** I'd rather face a mobile quarterback who struggles to throw. You can commit to the box, and I feel that we have good enough corners that we can play man-to-man coverage and commit an extra guy to the box. If I were on a team that didn't have confidence in their corners, maybe not. But the mobile QB, you just treat him as an extra back and you commit guys to the box and knock out the run. Whereas an elite passer, if he can fit things into tight windows, he just gives you problems. You look at the NFL, the majority of guys are elite passers.

Herm Edwards

WHY



The reaction to Arizona State's hiring of Edwards has ranged from scorn to bewilderment, but he and his new bosses insist he's the right man for the job

By Ted Miller

Herman Edwards takes over the interview after half an hour and evangelizes for 20 uninterrupted minutes, unburdened by specific questions. He preaches. He sells. He talks X's and O's and technique. He proselytizes with feeling, punctuating points by slapping his palm on a meeting table in his new office inside Arizona State's recently completed and palatial football building.

"The great coaches are teachers (slam) … it's not about the coach, it's about the guys in the huddle (slam) … football is the greatest game ever assembled (slam) when you think about what it does … We will stumble, but I won't let you fall. I will catch you (slam, slam) … We are male by birth, man by choice. I'm going to teach them the man part.

"People ask how I am doing. I'm great. I'm in my world. This is what I do. I love this."

It's difficult not to be charmed by a whirlwind of what an *Arizona Republic* writer dubbed "Herm-isms" in a March story. Edwards' wisdom, collected during his 64 years, pinballs between topics almost randomly, but the connective tissue is his passion and enthusiasm.

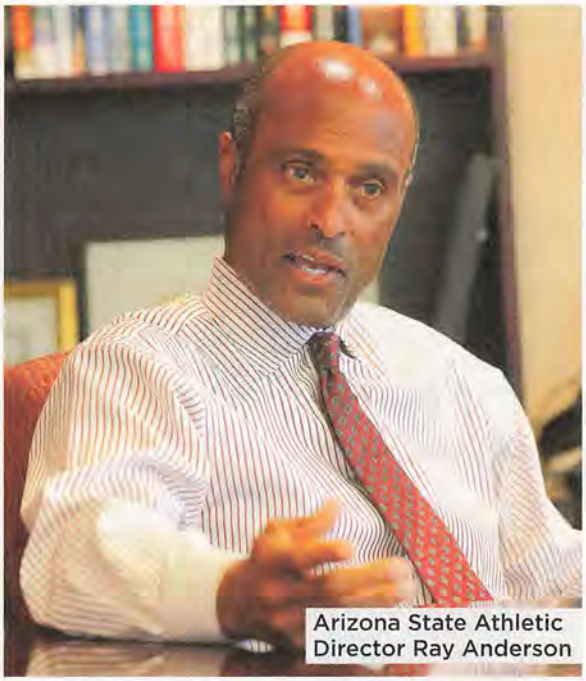
So it's no surprise when he waves away a question about whether he was bothered by the reaction to his hiring, which ranged from skepticism to outright mockery.

"No," he says. "That's America."

His résumé does have some gaps and red flags after a 10-year NFL playing career. His collegiate experience ended in 1989, after three years as a defensive backs coach at San Jose State. His record as an NFL head coach with the New York Jets and Kansas City Chiefs is 54–74. In his final season in Kansas City, he went 2–14.

He became an analyst at ESPN in 2009 and remained mostly out of the coaching rumor mill until his name immediately

Edwards: Arizona State Athletics; Anderson: AP



Arizona State Athletic Director Ray Anderson

emerged after athletic director Ray Anderson fired Todd Graham at the end of the Sun Devils' meandering 7–6 season.

"You have to ask yourself this: 'Do you have the energy to do this?' And there was no doubt I had the energy," Edwards says.

Wait. Let's back up. It's time to address the reason Edwards was even on the radar for a job in the collegiate ranks. There are dots, and they are easy to connect.

Before Anderson became Arizona State's athletic director in 2014 and before he spent seven-plus years as an NFL executive, he was a sports agent. Edwards was one of his clients, and that business relationship blossomed into a friendship — and a mutual respect, something that was clearly missing between Anderson and the coach he inherited when he took the job.

Graham, a Mesquite, Texas, native who played football at East Central University in Ada, Okla., is known for his spasming stream-of-consciousness delivery that often resembles a used-car salesman. Anderson went to Stanford and Harvard Law School. He's affable but polished and calculating. He repeatedly uses the term "very/quite frankly" when he's working a point that he wants you to retain.

While they were a mismatched pair from the beginning, their relationship could remain satisfactory when Graham was winning 10 games, as he did during Anderson's first year in Tempe. Things turned prickly, however, when Graham repeatedly talked about winning national championships before the 2015 season and finished 6–7.

"One of the things, very frankly, that we're trying to do better around here is to talk less and deliver more," Anderson told a Phoenix radio station in July 2016. "We'll be a minimum on the bravado and all the predictions about greatness and just let our play speak for us."

It didn't, at least not in a good way. Arizona State went 5–7 in 2016 — 2–7 in Pac-12 play — and Graham's seat became decidedly hot. Anderson doesn't hesitate when asked when things went south for Graham.

Anderson's mind started to boil, he says, after arch-rival Arizona racked up a school-record 511 yards rushing in a 56–35 victory over the Sun Devils to conclude that 2016 campaign.

"It was the worst, [most] non-competitive performance that I — most people I talked to — had ever seen coming out of an Arizona State football team," Anderson says. "They didn't have to attempt a single pass in the second half, and they totally embarrassed us and outplayed us in every single way."

While he won't admit to thinking about Edwards as a replacement at that point, he does point to a blowout loss to USC in October as when his mind was made up that a change would be needed.

Says Anderson: "It was in that period of time that I go, 'You know. I've seen this movie a whole bunch. Is it ever going to change?' I didn't believe it was going to change. That's when I started thinking about the candidates and if Herm was a viable candidate."

What Anderson prioritized above all else was recruiting. He says Graham's recruiting was "inefficient, so disorganized, so dysfunctional." His next coach needed to showcase charisma that filled up a living room and made Alabama, Ohio State and USC and their traditions feel like old news.

The cynical way to look at Anderson hiring Edwards is to see two buddies in their mid-60s looking to swerve toward retirement with a final two-minute possession. Instead of getting a suite at the Bellagio for a long weekend of gambling and golf, they decided to collaborate on building a football program — one that has long been termed "a sleeping giant" — into a West Coast power.

For Anderson, his closeness with Edwards isn't about hiring a buddy. It's about truly knowing the man and his skill set. And that skill set, Anderson believes, will transform the Sun Devils' mediocre recruiting. Anderson sees Edwards' passion, integrity, contagious enthusiasm and NFL pedigree as transformative for the Sun Devils' annual inability to consistently land four- and five-star recruits.

"Quite frankly, 70 percent of the success of a college coach is based on your ability to recruit," Anderson says. "I know Herman can deliver that. One thing I know about Herman is that he will be able to talk to parents and articulate the vision of what he wants to accomplish as a head coach within this institution."

There was no dramatic climb up the recruiting rankings during Edwards' first, albeit abbreviated, recruiting cycle. While there was a fairly strong finish, and the Sun Devils collected transfers from Stanford (Casey Tucker) and USC (Roy Hemsley), which should bolster the offensive line, they finished ranked 36th in the 247Sports Composite team rankings.

Arizona State has long labored in Pac-10/12 mediocrity, both on the field and in recruiting. It's 1–1 in Rose Bowl appearances, beating Michigan in 1987 and seeing an undefeated campaign and national title hopes end in 1997 against Ohio State. The Sun Devils are 45–46 in conference play since 2008 and 8–26 against ranked foes during the same span. Their recruiting rankings rarely have entered the top 20.

Where previous coaches failed to land big-time talent, Anderson believes Edwards will succeed. Edwards as a wild-card hire also offers an alternative to merely bringing in another good but not great mid-major head coach — see Graham — or elevating the latest hot but unproven coordinator.

"We've never been able to get [top recruits] because we haven't been organized and focused enough to know what we're looking for," Anderson says. "We haven't spent enough time studying that and then being able to sell that."

Much was made in the media about the awkward roll-out following the announcement of Edwards' hiring. For one, there was Edwards' current agent, Phil de Picciotto, being invited to the press conference to sell his client to an uncertain fan base, a dubious strategy because de Picciotto is the least objective Edwards observer alive. No slight to him, as that's his job.

Then there was Edwards interrupting a longtime reporter for "Devils Digest," which covers the program for the Rivals network, with, "'Devils Digest?' I'm Catholic now, I'm Christian, watch out for them Devils. I'm just saying. We're good, brother, we're good. I ain't taking it personal."

More substantively, there was an odd,

Puzzling Coaching Hires

The hires on this list started off with a rickety foundation that ranged from "maybe not" to "no way this works."



1 **Gerry Faust**, *Notre Dame (1981-85)*
Faust built a high school dynasty from 1962-80 at Archbishop Moeller in Cincinnati. Some called it "The Bold Experiment," handing a high school coach college football's most celebrated program. It was, however, a disaster from the start, and Faust was let go after compiling a 30-26-1 record in five seasons.

2 **Mike Price**, *Alabama (December 2002-May 2003)*
The affable Price never coached a game for the Tide, as a golf tournament in Pensacola, Fla., degenerated into a public scandal featuring a booze-filled evening with strippers. It was a peculiar hire that quickly became a massive embarrassment.



3 **Lane Kiffin, Derek Dooley,** *Tennessee (2009-12)*
Kiffin showed up in Knoxville running his mouth, and after a lackluster 7-6 season bolted for USC in January 2010. Dooley was coming off a 4-8 season at Louisiana Tech. After three consecutive losing seasons, he ended up with the worst record in school history among head coaches with more than two seasons.

4



Rich Rodriguez, *Michigan (2008-10)*
There is something to be said for "fit." This marriage was a mismatch from the beginning, and it didn't help that former coach Lloyd Carr opposed Rodriguez's hiring and worked against him behind the scenes from the get-go.



5 **Charlie Weis**, *Kansas (2012-14)*
The Kansas job requires a young, innovative optimist, not a fading grump. In light of that, Weis was a baffling hire and obviously terrible fit. He went 6-22 (.214) and pretty much enraged everybody around the program with his "Not my fault" excuses and carping.

6 **Bill Callahan**, *Nebraska (2004-07)*
Also from the "Just doesn't fit the culture" file, Callahan was a long-time NFL coach taking over a meat-and-potatoes college program. He went 5-6 in year one and finished with a tepid 27-22 record.

7 **Ted Tollner**, *USC (1983-86)*
Tollner was hired to lead the West Coast's premier program after just a single year as the Trojans offensive coordinator under John Robinson. He'd never before been a head coach. Though he led USC to a Rose Bowl, his 26-20-1 record tells a story of mediocrity.



8 **Will Muschamp,** *South Carolina (2016-present)*
Sometimes a puzzling hire ... might just work out? Fact is, Muschamp's hiring to replace Steve Spurrier seemed completely uninspired. Yet after a solid 9-4 season, some naysayers are yaysaying.

9 **Ed Orgeron**, *LSU (2017-present)*
While Orgeron is a great recruiter and good guy to fire up a locker room, his temperament doesn't suggest head coach, nor does his résumé. His hiring in 2016 was mostly an act of desperation, and he sits on perhaps the hottest seat in the SEC this fall.

10 **Ron Zook**, *Florida (2002-04)*
Zook, with zero head-coaching experience, arrived as a letdown and a head scratcher in the wake of the Steve Spurrier era. He didn't do much to change that perception over three mediocre (for Florida) seasons.

BONUS



Pete Carroll, *USC (2001-09)*
Sometimes so-called pundits bomb in their evaluations. Carroll was mocked as a failed NFL coach with almost no college experience — sound familiar, Arizona State? — but it took him just one season to find his rhythm and build a national dynasty before heading off to win a Super Bowl with the Seattle Seahawks.

breathless press release that appeared to claim Arizona State's hiring of Edwards would be paired with a dynamic new organizational model that would revolutionize college football.

As the release said: "This structure will allow the department to form a multi-layered method to the talent evaluation and recruiting processes, increase its emphasis on both student-athlete and coach development and retention, and provide a boost in resource allocation and generation."

Huh?

Questions asking for specifics yielded little substance, though it's clear that Arizona State pushes an admirable focus on academic support, what it calls, "Championship Life." But there is no secret sauce, no fantastic new proprietary model.

The crux on the football side of things is an emphasis on, yes, recruiting, which is portrayed as a more NFL-esque method of evaluation.

Both Edwards and Anderson are aligned in believing that football players should hit physical marks in terms of size, weight and speed by position. What this comes down to is a de-emphasis on scrappy, short players and an aggressive pursuit of "length" at every position.

This is hardly revolutionary. In fact, it is exactly what Chip Kelly emphasized when he transformed Oregon from top-25 team with a fancy scheme to an annual national title contender filled with NFL prospects who looked like NBA power forwards.

Further, part of the initial selling point was that Edwards planned to retain much of Graham's coaching staff in order to ensure continuity, most particularly offensive coordinator Billy Napier.

"[Quarterback] Manny Wilkins does not need a fourth coordinator in four years," Anderson said at the press conference announcing Graham's termination.

But then Napier became Louisiana's head coach, and Wilkins ended up with his fourth play caller in four years, though Rob Likens was promoted from co-offensive coordinator.

"It's hard to trust when people just come and go in your life," says Wilkins, who admits to being a bit jaded by the business end of college football. "Questions arise any time you get anybody new. Everybody was wondering what's it going to be like [under Edwards]. We found out quick the energy he brings to the table and how much the game means to him. You could see how excited he was to be back in coaching."

As far as scheme, Edwards says things are going to slow down on offense, particularly in terms of limiting the other team's possessions. Yes, as he noted at his introductory news conference, he really likes huddles. He wants the quarterback under center more, too. He wants a big, physical offensive line to lead a smash-mouth attack. He wants his running backs to catch the ball more. He likes a controlled passing game that stays in front of the chains.

Says Edwards, "I told Likens when he took the job, 'Hey, when it's third-and-1, please tell me we're not throwing a pass.'"

On defense, Edwards brought in Danny Gonzales, a Rocky Long protégé from San Diego State, to replace Phil Bennett. Gonzales will adapt his own brand of a 3-3-5. Edwards says he wants to be aggressive with stunts and QB pressure but also admitted concerns about the Sun Devils secondary, which has struggled in recent years.

Unlike a lot of coaches, Edwards seems eager to engage over X's and O's. In fact, he insists that his time away from the sidelines broadened his football knowledge, while coaching prep all-stars in the Under Armour game kept him hip to what motivates young people.

"[Time off] is the best thing for you," he says. "I'd tell coaches that sometimes you need to get away from it just to kind of get the bird's-eye view."

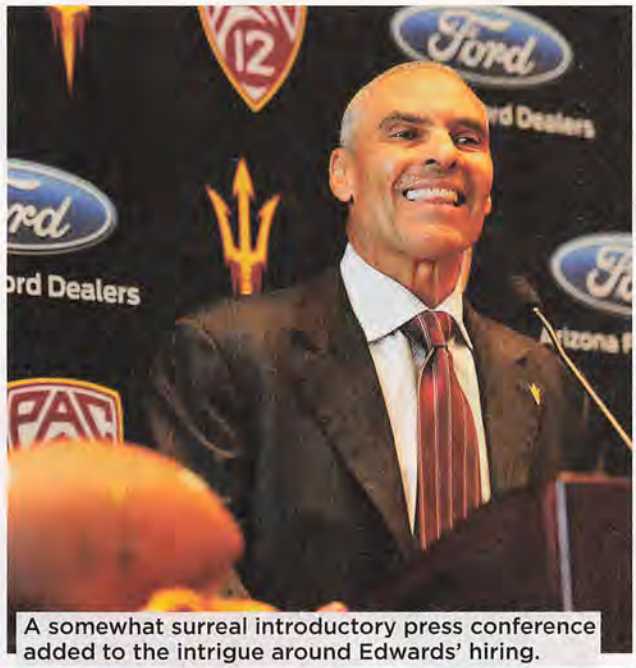
One of Edwards' close football friends and mentors knows a little bit about taking an extended time away from coaching. Dick Vermeil also knows a thing or two about overcoming initial skepticism about making a comeback. Vermeil coached the Philadelphia Eagles from 1976-82, leading them, including Edwards, to Super Bowl XV, but he resigned after the 1982 season, citing burnout. After a long run in broadcasting, he returned to the sidelines in 1997 as the St. Louis Rams head coach. After two terrible seasons, he led the Rams to a victory in Super Bowl XXXIV in January 2000.

Vermeil echoes Edwards, saying his years observing the game as a color commentator helped him when he returned to coaching. His was one of the first calls Edwards took when he accepted Arizona State's offer.

"The players who play for him are going to be privileged to get a different level of leadership than they'd normally get at a Division I situation," Vermeil says. "Herman is going to coach the entire person. Whether they win or lose, they will be better people and probably better players."

Another comparison Sun Devils fans will like: Pete Carroll. When Carroll was hired at USC in 2000, it was a last resort after then-athletic director Mike Garrett was turned down by Mike Riley, Dennis Erickson and Mike Bellotti.

This was the lead for the Associated Press story: "Pete Carroll, fired from his two NFL coaching jobs and out of college football for 17 years, was hired today to succeed Paul Hackett as coach at Southern California."



A somewhat surreal introductory press conference added to the intrigue around Edwards' hiring.

The Carroll-USC marriage turned out pretty well, falling just short of three consecutive national titles amid a run of Pac-10 and recruiting dominance.

So the reaction ranging from skeptical to mocking is nothing new. Of course, USC is one thing. It's a perennial national power situated smack in the middle of a target-rich recruiting region. Arizona State is an entirely different program.

Edwards is energized, though. Not by the critics, nor the doubters. By the challenge.

"There are two types of people who will sit in the leadership seat," he says "There's one that will coach or teach by their seat. Or they will teach with their feet. I teach with my feet. I'm everywhere."

He then delivers one last slap to the table.

Callahan: Larry W. Smith; Pete Carroll: Peter Brouillet; Rodriguez: Al Goldis; Kiffin: Brad Schloss; Weis: Peter G. Aiken; Muschamp: Paul Abell; Edwards: Arizona State Athletics

NEXT CHANCE U

By Ted Miller

For many formerly coveted quarterbacks, junior college represents an important stop on the road to football relevance



There they sit on National Signing Day, colorful hats before them, smiles rolling across their faces amid beaming, proud parents, teachers and coaches, knowing that ardent fan bases are holding their collective breaths in anticipation of a dramatic decision.

Ah, life is good for the highly rated high school quarterback choosing from among Power 5 programs.

But that happy, spotlighted first Wednesday in February often yields to something else, something less popular, well-defined and catchy: "Bounce Back May."

That's not an official term for the Power 5-to-junior college transfer, because the journey from pampered "Next Big Thing Behind Center" to "Unhappy QB Transfer" is often a circuitous route. Things can turn sour on or off the field slowly or suddenly and in a variety of ways.

For junior college football coaches, Bounce Back May is often an intense time of phone calls, networking, obsessing over social media and meeting room debates. They pay close attention to spring football QB competitions, where depth chart computations can turn Signing Day smiles into frustrated frowns. It's not unlike a waiver wire.

These coaches speculate about QBs yoked by proverbial "team rules violations" or academic issues. And, yes, they raise an eyebrow at the police blotter that might separate a QB from a superpower program unwilling to take an extended PR hit.

"As far as Signing Day, we did not sign a quarterback," Garden City (Kan.) Community College coach Jeff Sims says. "And we did not sign a quarterback because, to me, this isn't the time of year you sign a quarterback. You sign a quarterback in May. You see who's not happy and who fits where."

Quarterbacks are compelling here because, at least in most cases, only one gets the vast majority of action. They also are the de facto team leader, the guy with the ball in his hands, making plus/minus decisions on every play. No position in sports includes so many physical and mental demands, and JC coaches know that signing a capable QB for a one- or two-year tenure can transform a team like no other individual player.

On the QB's end, things are less appealing. Bounce Back May makes concrete and inescapable a Point A of often high-profile quarterbacking failure, whether that's about falling short in a competition, in the classroom or as a member of a team or a campus community.

JC coaches don't sugar coat what their programs are in their recruiting pitches. While "Last Chance U" started out as a Netflix series about East Mississippi Community College, it moved to Independence Community College in Kansas for season three, and the title truly applies to all JC programs.

"However many stars you once had by your name, that's out the window — you're now at Iowa Western," Reivers coach Scott Strohmeier says of his initial message to incoming players. "You need to make the most of the situation and buy into our system, where no one player is bigger than the team. I've had guys that didn't buy in, and it didn't work out."

Or, as Sims says, "Going to junior college is very similar to being an alcoholic. The first thing you have to do is admit there's a problem."

Take Kai Locksley, son of Alabama's new offensive coordinator, Mike Locksley. It's difficult to imagine a more twisting story for a former top recruit.

A four-star QB out of the Gilman School in Baltimore in 2014-15, he committed to Florida State but switched his pledge to Texas on Signing Day. Couldn't be much more blue chip than that, right? But things didn't go well in Austin. He redshirted, then switched to receiver. Along the way, Locksley complained. A lot.

"It was a bad timing thing," he says. "Two pieces came together that didn't fit at that time. I didn't deal with that well. I was very childish and made immature decisions because the fit didn't work."

He transferred to Arizona Western in Yuma. Then, before suiting up, he decided he'd go to Marshall. But, realizing he'd have to sit out a year, he changed his mind. Upon doing so, he also decided he'd be a better fit at Iowa Western.

None of this fortified his résumé.

"A lot of kids can go either direction," Strohmeier says. "We told him this was his last shot, his last chance to prove it."

He tried to reverse a downward spiral, but as he was battling for playing time after losing a preseason competition for the starting job to Kurt Walding, his brother, Meiko Locksley, was shot and killed on Sept. 3 back home near Washington, D.C.



He could have quit or fallen apart or submerged himself in self-pity. Instead, he rededicated and refocused himself, came off the bench and became the starter. He then put up big numbers and earned NJCAA Offensive Player of the Year honors.

"God was trying to send me a message," he says. "I used my brother's death as that light switch that needed to come on."

Still, big-time offers didn't follow. Locksley signed with UTEP, where he has two years of eligibility remaining. So he got back to the FBS level, just not at a Power 5 school.

Strohmeier likes Locksley's story and its potential for redemption. He also likes that he's got Walding coming back. That takes the pressure off during Bounce Back May, though a JC coach always keeps his eyes on FBS spring quarterback competitions.

Tom Minnick, a two-time JC national runner-up at Arizona Western, offers a different story, though one also bred of success. He had two good quarterbacks this past season in Arizona State transfer Bryce Perkins and Jack Colletto, the Washington state prep Player of the Year in 2016.

"However many stars you once had by your name, that's out the window — you're now at Iowa Western. You need to make the most of the situation and buy into our system, where no one player is bigger than the team. I've had guys that didn't buy in, and it didn't work out."

— Iowa Western coach Scott Strohmeier on his message to new arrivals

Left: East Mississippi Community College Athletics; Strohmeier: Iowa Western CC Marketing

Perkins put up good numbers as the starter and signed with Virginia, which wasn't surprising. However, Colletto, whom Minnick projected as his 2018 starter, also earned attention with only spot duty. Memphis first raised an eyebrow, and then Vanderbilt joined the fray. A Pac-12 offer from Oregon State proved too tempting.

That, of course, is the stated goal of all JC programs: To send their players off to — or back to — the big time. Minnick is pleased with his program's success in doing just that, only now he has to recalibrate for 2018.

"We're hurting for [a QB] right now," he said in February. "We thought we'd have Jack back and we'd be in the [national championship] mix right away."

So this past Bounce Back May was big for Minnick, who says he lost a potential transfer from a Big Ten school because of Colletto's expected return. He entered what he called a recruiting "free-for-all," wanting to add three quarterbacks to his roster after he signed one in February.

That kind of challenge means obsessively monitoring media reports on spring practices and QB competitions as well as Twitter and other social media postings. It means making strategic calls to friendly FBS assistant coaches. It means taking/making calls from/to players and parents and other putative player representatives, such as former high school coaches, 7-on-7 coaches or, yes, street agent sorts.

> ***"I try to scoop up as many guys as I can. There are a lot of guys out there trying to give it a go. We're year-round recruiting looking for a guy. That's what junior college is all about — trying to snatch those guys up and give them another opportunity."***
>
> — Snow College coach Paul Peterson



The JC recruiting competition for QBs doesn't headline reports on Rivals or 247Sports, but it gets pretty heated.

"It's gotten worse in the past couple of years," Minnick says. "I won't mention any names. It's a sore spot for me after losing a couple of kids, kids that got lied to."

Another challenge is that various junior college powers play by different recruiting rules and limitations, according to state policies.

While East Mississippi owns four national championships since 2011 under Buddy Stephens, it operates under significant limitations. The Lions can offer only eight out-of-state players among their 55 total scholarships. Many top JCs, such as Garden City, offer 85 scholarships and have no out-of-state limits.

Stephens says that stopped him from pursuing Cam Newton in 2008-09. Of course, he had future Ole Miss starter Randall Mackey coming back, and his program hasn't lacked big-name transfers, from Bo Wallace (Arkansas



Kai Locksley

THOSE WHO SLIPPED

Kai Locksley and De'Andre Johnson profess contentment as well as greater self-knowledge as a result of their fall from Power 5 grace.

Yes, self-inflicted wounds diminished them. Yes, changing circumstances challenged and humbled them, as they fell from A-list quarterback recruits to grinding for junior college teams.

No, their redemptive stories don't conclude with either back luxuriating at a Power 5 program, primed for future NFL close-ups.

But both used junior college turns to earn new FBS scholarships with good chances to start in 2018.

And, no, junior college wasn't easy.

"In all honesty, it's not for everybody," says Locksley, who will suit up for UTEP this fall after starting out at Texas.

"It's not for the weak-minded. You feel very alone. You're on your own. It's not like Division I where you have people calling you to make sure you're doing this or getting to that. It's up to you. If you are not a confident guy and don't believe in yourself and you need motivation and structure, I'd transfer [FBS] school to school and sit out a year."

Though both fell afoul of their original teams, Locksley's story at Texas is very different from Johnson's at Florida State. Locksley, son of Alabama offensive coordinator Mike Locksley, fell out of favor after complaining about the depth chart and a position change, both in the locker room and on Twitter. Johnson was caught on video punching a woman in a Tallahassee bar in 2015.

Locksley's post-Texas decision-slalom between two different junior colleges and Marshall was about getting back behind center as soon as possible. Conversely, Johnson wanted — and needed — to lay low after leaving FSU. At least, that's what he figured out when no other FBS program recruited him.

At that point, he knew nothing about junior college football, but a call to his parents from coaches at East Mississippi Community College made it clear that his options were

Locksley: Iowa Western CC Marketing; deWeaver: AP; Peterson: Snow College Athletics

State) to Chad Kelly (Clemson) to John Franklin (Florida State) to De'Andre Johnson (Florida State) to Lindsey Scott (LSU).

His latest A-list transfer is Messiah deWeaver from Michigan State, a former four-star recruit stuck behind Brian Lewerke on the Spartans depth chart.

"If you're a quarterback, you want to come here because we are going to chunk the ball around," Stephen says.

While JC coaches with more generous scholarship limits and rules often try to stockpile QBs, Stephens wants only three, and his third guy often plays a second position.

"Last Chance U" also highlighted two notable aspects of Stephens' program, other than Stephens' sometimes colorful temper. First, it's obviously a meritocracy, as unheralded Wyatt Roberts beat Franklin out for the starting job, though that didn't stop Franklin from bouncing back to Auburn and then Florida Atlantic.

And, second, like most JC coaches, Stephens is willing to give players a second chance, even if their transgressions were horrific and caught on video, as with De'Andre Johnson. Johnson punched a woman in the face inside a Tallahassee bar in 2015, and the impossible-to-rationalize video immediately went viral.

Stephens says there was significant discussion at the coaching and administrative level about Johnson in advance of his getting offered.

"I go back to one question," Stephens says. "Would I be OK with this kid coming to school here and being in the classroom with my daughter? That's it."

Johnson helped improve his image on "Last Chance U" — he's consistently expressed shame and regret over the incident — but he still wasn't able to return to a Power 5 school, though more than a few considered rolling the dice on him.

Says Johnson, "I didn't get recruited the way I thought I would. It was definitely frustrating. It was humbling and motivating."

While some JC coaches say they are skeptical of transfers who are booted from FBS teams for legal issues, particularly violent ones, others view second chances and rehabilitation as centerpieces of their mission.

Sims notes that he grew up in a house where his mom was challenged financially because his estranged father was a convicted drug dealer in St. Louis and went to jail for conspiracy to commit murder when Sims was starting college. As for college, Sims flunked out of Tulsa before getting his act together.

"I get nervous when I talk to reporters, but I try to be honest," he says. "In our program, we do not judge people by what they did prior to being here. There's a lot that goes into that answer, though.

"If a guy was already punished, who are we to punish him again? We give people the opportunity to come here. Playing football for us isn't easy."

He adds, "I don't know if Garden City is a reward."

Sims says his two best bounce-backs were Dom-



Messiah deWeaver

limited and a year off might serve him well.

"I knew in my situation it was going to be a process," says Johnson, now in his second season at Florida Atlantic.

"They already had some quarterbacks, and I knew I wanted to sit out a year and let things calm down and rebuild myself back up, spiritually and physically."

Johnson did a good job rehabilitating his image at East Mississippi, both within the team and on the Netflix series, "Last Chance U." But that wasn't enough for a high-profile program to give him a second chance, since that horrific video is just a Google search away and will be for years to come.

"I think De'Andre is a fantastic young man who made a bad decision one night," East Mississippi coach Buddy Stephens says. "I wish people would give him a break."

Stephens' sentiments aren't just self-interested. They speak to the thinking of many junior college coaches who see their programs as "Second Chance U," where redemption is often the prime directive. Johnson, in fact, gets support from one of East Mississippi's biggest rivals.

"What he did was horrible and nobody would say that it is right," Garden City (Kan.) coach Jeff Sims says. "But if we sat down and lined out his punishment and he did his punishment — in our society you are supposed to be able to move on. We talk all the time about forgiving. When is the punishment over and the rehabilitation beginning? When do you get another chance? Nobody is condoning what he did. We just feel like we are the ground floor that they get to rebound on."

Neither Locksley's nor Johnson's journey since they left their Power 5 schools has been easy. Locksley left Arizona Western for Iowa Western because he wanted to prove he was a pass-first QB, but he ended up at No. 2 on the depth chart early in the season. Then, on Sept. 3, 2017, his brother was shot and killed near his home in Washington, D.C.

Johnson played well for East Mississippi and was a team leader from the beginning, but A-list offers weren't forthcoming. Early in the 2017 season at FAU, he was diagnosed with blood clots in his arm, which threatened his career.

But Johnson was cleared to play in the spring, when he battled with Oklahoma transfer Chris Robison for the starting job.

Both Locksley and Johnson admit some frustration with not getting back to the Power 5 level, as well as some residual motivation to prove those programs wrong.

Says Locksley, "The school I picked is the perfect opportunity for that. I definitely have doubters and people who are like, 'Why would you go to UTEP?' I think it's another piece of the story that people are going to learn real soon."

— Ted Miller

inique Davis, a Boston College transfer who helped Sims and Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College win the national title in 2009, and Terry Wilson this year at Garden City.

Davis left Fort Scott for East Carolina and then the NFL and CFL. Wilson, an Oregon transfer, will battle for the starting job at Kentucky this spring.

"The common trait with Terry and Dominique is that the day they got here, they were our quarterback," Sims says. "Where guys fail is when they show up and make the same mistakes they were making at the four-year that wasn't getting them the starting job."

Paul Peterson only took over at Snow College in 2017, but he's an expert on being a JC QB in Ephraim, Utah. He was the Badgers starter in 2001-02 and earned JC Grid-Wire All-America honors before transferring to Boston College.

His QB this past season, Shane Johnson, ended up as a preferred walk-on at Texas A&M, so second-year Southern Utah transfer Nick Robins will battle for the starting job this spring.

But nothing is set for Robins, by any means. Peterson admits he's on the lookout for a bounce-back. He says that's how JC works, noting that another Snow success story, Josh Heupel, who won a national title at Oklahoma in 2000, displaced returning JC All-American Fred Salanoa in 1998.

"I try to scoop up as many guys as I can," he says. "There are a lot of guys out there trying to give it a go. We're year-round recruiting looking for a guy.

"That's what junior college is all about — trying to snatch those guys up and give them another opportunity."

National Signing Day is awash in glory, and the adulation after becoming a starter at a Power 5 school invites NFL dreams.

For many others, there is Bounce Back May and Last Chance U. It doesn't come with klieg lights and confetti, but it does offer hope.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

Wyatt Roberts, featured in the Netflix series "Last Chance U," has happily retreated from the spotlight and begun a fairly typical adult life. For more on his underdog saga, visit athlonsports.com/ncu.

THOSE WHO RETURNED TO THE POWER 5

The quarterbacking journeys of Terry Wilson and Lindsey Scott are roughly equivalent. They fell short on the depth chart at Power 5 contenders, soberly considered their options, took junior college seriously and now are rebooting at other Power 5 schools.

Wilson, the favorite to replace Stephen Johnson at Kentucky after a successful season at Garden City (Kan.) Community College, chose Oregon out of high school for a pretty straightforward reason.

"Because it was Oregon," he says, making an assessment that most college football fans understand, as the Ducks are about bling-y facilities and gear, fancypants offenses and Pac-12 and national contention.

The same goes for Scott, who was admitted to Harvard but was more entranced by the SEC's bright lights than aged buildings covered in ivy when he signed with LSU. When the depth chart failed to go his way, he called East Mississippi Community College and asked if they had a spot.

"Sitting out another year and not playing football [as an FBS transfer] wasn't appealing," Scott says. "So juco was a good idea. You get recruited all over again and you get to play."

Scott led East Mississippi to its fourth national championship since 2011 and bounced back to Missouri, where he'll likely battle to be Drew Lock's backup this fall in order to position himself to win the starting job in 2019.

While Scott clinically pursued East Mississippi, Wilson didn't have a specific plan set when he decided to transfer from Oregon after Justin Herbert won the starting job and almost instantly became a budding star.

"The day word got out about me transferring from Oregon, I woke up with messages from maybe 10 different jucos calling me," Wilson says. "I was confused at first because I'd never heard anything about junior colleges, never been to any junior colleges in my life. I didn't know what I was getting myself into."

He chose Garden City in large part because it was coming off the 2016 national championship. There was a period of, well, adjustment after the luxury of Eugene.

"One of my biggest pet peeves is when a Division I transfer comes to our place and wears all the gear of his previous place," Garden City coach Jeff Sims says. "The reason it's a pet peeve of mine is the reason he's not at the previous place is because they didn't want him to stay."

While Sims wasn't specifically talking about Wilson, Wilson admits that looking backward was a part of his experience, an experience that gained depth and meaning as he learned some hard lessons.

"When I first got there, I was stubborn," Wilson says. "I didn't want to accept the fact I was there. But after a while you have to accept why you're there. You have to accept the truth."

JC coaches and their QB transfers are using each other for their own reasons. The coaches want to win, and the QBs want to get scholarships to get back to FBS programs.

While success is measured for the QB by where he ends up after junior college, both Wilson and Scott admit they feel loyalty to their bounce-back destinations.

As Scott explains: "[Junior college] can be selfish in a sense, but you all are working toward the same goal, your individual efforts run into each other and make it a group effort. You have to be invested in winning games to get the [FBS] college coaches to pay attention."

— Ted Miller

East Mississippi Community College Athletics

THE NEW Pioneer & AMERICAN FRONTIERSMAN

2 GREAT MAGAZINES 1 LOW PRICE!



Self-efficacy and sustainability are beautiful things. And we cover those topics and much more in *The New Pioneer*. Whether you're interested in rain-catching, solar power, going completely off-grid, choosing your long dreamed of piece of real estate, gardening or keeping animals, we've got you covered.

The American Frontiersman celebrates the land offers timeless tips for self-reliance. You can think of each issue of *The American Frontiersman* as somewhere between a barn-raising and a rendezvous. Every issue that we pour out on the trade blanket will have lessons from the past, or sometimes the front pages, on how to nourish the frontier spirit and apply the mindset to surviving, even flourishing, and having a jug full of fun, on our own.

THE NEW Pioneer & AMERICAN FRONTIERSMAN

67% OFF THE NEWSSTAND RATE!

☑ 1-year of *New Pioneer* (4 issues) + 1-year of *American Frontiersman* (2 issues) for only $19.97 a **67% DISCOUNT!**

Athlon Media Group | Attn: Subscriptions
2451 Atrium Way, Ste 320 | Nashville, TN 37214
OR CALL 1-800-284-5668

Name

Address

City State Zip

Email (your email address will not be shared with third parties)

Phone

☐ Payment Enclosed (make checks payable to Athlon Media Group)
Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX

Card No. Exp. Date

Signature NPIO18CFB

Canada add $20 postage, other countries outside U.S. add $40 postage for each year. Pay in U.S. funds only. Payment must accompany orders. Please allow 4-8 weeks delivery for new subscriptions. *The New Pioneer* is published 4 times per year (cover price is $9.95). *American Frontiersman* is published 2 times per year (cover price is $9.95).

ONE Shining MOMENT



These unsung players rose to the occasion when the stakes were highest

By Matt Crossman

When Alabama backup quarterback Tua Tagovailoa walked onto the field to replace the struggling Jalen Hurts in the second half of the Alabama-Georgia National Championship Game in January, some casual college football fans' initial reaction was probably, Who is that?

But now, after Tagovailoa led the Crimson Tide to their fifth national championship under head coach Nick Saban, he is a household name among college football fans. But whether his name remains well known to fans across the country or simply becomes a remarkable footnote depends largely on what he does next. He can't top winning the national championship. Can he make a name for himself beyond that one game? Or will he fade into obscurity?

Either way, Tagovailoa joins a long line of previously unknown college football players who came up big when it mattered most. *Athlon Sports* caught up with five of them to relive their moments in the spotlight.



Willy Merrick, Marshall

▸ The player: IOWA WIDE RECEIVER WARREN HOLLOWAY

The game: Capitol One Bowl, Jan. 1, 2005. Iowa defeats LSU, 30-25.

The backstory: Holloway was a senior who had played three seasons on the team. Before this play, he had 32 catches and zero touchdowns. He had been overthrown in the end zone once and caught a ball at the 5-yard line once before being run out of bounds. But other than those two, he had never come close to scoring. It became a running joke in his family: "Every game it was, 'When are you going to get one?'" he says. "My family was like, 'It's your last game, last chance to get a touchdown.'"

The play: Iowa was down by one with the ball at their own 46. Holloway caught a pass on the previous play, and he and the rest of the offense thought he had picked up a first down and that the clock was stopped. But neither was true. The clock was still running, and the Hawkeyes only had time for one more play. As they called the play in the huddle, they realized the defense was out of sorts. That defensive confusion continued when the play started. The defender who lined up on Holloway allowed him to run by, and the safety picked up the tight end. That meant that Holloway was running alone toward the end zone.

"I knew I was open at that point. But the play was supposed to go to the other side of the field. I guess that guy just wasn't as open as me," he says.

As he looked back toward quarterback Drew Tate, he saw the ball sailing in his direction … but it was drifting so far to his right, over his outside shoulder, that he didn't think he could catch it. "I honestly didn't think he was throwing it to me," he says.

But Holloway ran toward the ball because he knew it was the last play, and he wanted to be in position in case it got tipped. "Somebody in an Iowa jersey has to catch this ball," he thought.

And then something strange happened. The ball stopped sailing and seemed to hang right over his head. Holloway caught it, and there was nobody in front of him. He bounced off of a defender and instinctively put both hands over the ball, like a tailback bursting through the line, in case anybody tried to jar it loose.

"The last 15 yards felt like three steps," he says. "I hadn't seen that much green grass since high school."

He knew instantaneously he had just completed a play he'd be talking about for the rest of his life. What he wasn't sure of was how long that life would be. He was soon dogpiled under about 50 players.

The aftermath: Like many players who have made iconic plays, Holloway, who is married with a daughter and is pursuing a degree in physical therapy, has heard crazy stories about where fans were and what they did after his catch. One guy ran through a screen door. Another dropped his baby. His favorite is from a woman who said her grandfather was watching at a bar, and after the play was over, he climbed up on a table and started dancing.

▸ The player: MARSHALL KICKER WILLY MERRICK

The game: 1992 NCAA Division I-AA National Championship Game, Dec. 19, 1992. Marshall defeats Youngstown State, 31–28.

The backstory: Merrick had never attempted, let alone made, a field goal in his college football career. That year, he played soccer and football but handled only kickoff duties. His brother, David, handled field goals and extra points. But coach Jim Donnan suspended David the week of the title game after he missed a practice.

The night before the game, in a motivational speech to fire up his players, Donnan said: "Willy Merrick, you don't have to worry tomorrow, because we're going to kick the crap out of them. You're just going to have to kick extra points and kickoffs."

And when the game started, that's exactly what happened for two-and-a-half quarters. Marshall held a 28–0 lead halfway through the third quarter. But then Youngstown State stormed back to tie it at 28 with 2:28 remaining.

The play: "That two minutes was probably the most nervous I've been in my whole life," Merrick says of Marshall's final drive. "I thought we were going to score the touchdown. Orlando Hatchett, our running back, was cutting people up. I thought he was going to break one."

But he didn't. The drive stalled at the 5-yard line, and Merrick was called in to attempt the first field goal of his career. Jim Tressel, Youngstown State's coach at the time and now its president, called timeout to try to freeze him.

"Youngstown's talking smack, giving me all kinds of crap. 'You're not going to make this, kicker, you suck.' I kind of just drifted off to the side toward my bench," Merrick says. "I just blocked everything out. There was nothing that phased me once we went back out there. We just said, 'Let's just make sure we get a clean snap and hold, and I'll do my job, I'll do my business.' That's what happened."

As soon as the snap hit the holder's hands, Merrick started his motion. His left foot booted it straight down the middle.

The timing of the snap, hold and kick were perfect, and that's a good thing. A Youngstown State defender got around the edge. "If I was a split second off, they would have blocked it," Merrick says.

Holloway: Getty Images; Merrick: Marshall Athletics

The aftermath: Merrick played professional soccer for a few years after college and is now a soccer coach at Ohio Dominican University. A few years ago, then-head football coach Bill Conley invited Tressel to speak on campus. He introduced Merrick to Tressel.

"Coach Tressel's first words were, like, 'I hate you.' I think the next words out of his mouth were, 'That was the worst kick I've ever seen.' I was like, 'It went in, brother,'" Merrick says. "I think he was serious that it wasn't the greatest kick he had ever seen. But it was all in laughter, and we continued talking for another five or 10 minutes."



Kenny Calhoun, Miami

The player: MIAMI SAFETY KENNY CALHOUN

The game: Orange Bowl, Jan. 2, 1984. Miami defeats Nebraska, 31-30, and is named national champion.

The backstory: The game was an instant classic. Nebraska scored late to pull within one point, 31–30. Calhoun and the entire defense had been beaten to give up that TD. He bit on a fake on a fourth-and-8 option play that turned into a 24-yard touchdown run by Jeff Smith, and Calhoun was angry about it. As Nebraska lined up to go for the two-point conversion and the win — as opposed to kicking the extra point and settling for the tie, which would have given the Cornhuskers the national championship — Calhoun did not want to make another mistake and cost his team the game. "On that particular play, I said a prayer. 'Lord, help me.'"

The play: Calhoun, a safety, says that the team had worked on the defensive play for weeks, based on what coaches discovered on game film. The play was called 55 double dog trio. The double dog meant that the linebackers would blitz, and trio referred to the coverage responsibilities.

Nebraska's play was designed to have two receivers cut across the middle and draw Calhoun there. That would leave Smith, coming out of the backfield, open in the flat. It was, indeed, a beautifully designed play. But Calhoun didn't bite on it. He let wide receiver Irving Fryar go across the middle and looked at quarterback Turner Gill. "I saw him looking out in the flat, so I sprinted that way. I didn't see Jeff Smith [the intended receiver]. I just got in the path of the ball and batted the ball away," Calhoun says. "I stuck my right hand out, batted the ball away. It was a bang-bang play."

If Gill had thrown the ball an inch farther to the outside, Calhoun wouldn't have been able to reach it. But as it was, Calhoun's right index finger and ring finger altered the path of the ball. It bounced off of Smith's shoulder pad and fell to the ground.

The aftermath: This play has grown in stature since it happened. At the time, it was a big play, yes, an Orange Bowl-winning play. But it wasn't clear at the time that Miami would end up winning the national championship. The Hurricanes entered the game ranked fifth and vaulted to the No. 1 spot because No. 2 Texas and No. 4 Illinois lost their bowl games. Seen through that lens, Calhoun's play has come to be known as a key play in helping to create the powerhouse program that Miami became over the next two decades.

It looms large in Nebraska lore, too. ESPN did a 23-minute documentary focusing entirely on Nebraska coach Tom Osborne's decision to go for the two-point conversion and the win instead of the kick and tie. It was called "Two Points, One Title."

The following year, Calhoun was on the field when his defense gave up an even more famous play: the Doug Flutie Hail Mary. Asked if that memory was still unpleasant all these years later, he says: "Unpleasant? I really don't look at it that way. In sports, you have your ups and downs. That's why you have to play every snap. The year before, we won the championship. And the next year, you have that happen. It keeps you grounded to know that, just because you were champs last year, doesn't dictate the next play or the outcomes of other games. You have to play each play down to the end."

The player: NOTRE DAME TIGHT END ROBIN WEBER

The game: Sugar Bowl, Dec. 31, 1973. Notre Dame defeats Alabama, 24–23, to win the national championship in a game pitting marquee teams led by marquee coaches [Ara Parseghian and Bear Bryant] playing on the game's biggest stage with the title on the line. Both teams were undefeated. "It was North against South, Catholics against Protestants," Weber says. "It was just a huge, huge game."

The backstory: For the first half of the season, Weber played only in mop-up duty. He had one catch, for 11 yards. Starting with the second half of the team's sixth game (against USC), he played more often but still only in running situations.

On Notre Dame's second-to-last possession against Alabama, they faced third-and-goal from the 2, down 23–21. "They call this



Robin Weber's second catch of the 1973 season was the biggest play of his career — a game-clinching 36-yard gain in Notre Dame's 24–23 win over Alabama.

Calhoun: Athlon Archives; Weber: Sports Illustrated/Getty Images; Sales: AP



Arkansas running back Roland Sales (No. 21) emerged from obscurity to rush for 205 yards in the Hogs' stunning 31–6 upset of Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 2, 1978.

play in from the sideline, and it's a pass play. I still have nightmares about it," he says. "I've never run a pass play with the first team, ever, not once. I've never caught a pass from [quarterback] Tom Clements, ever, not once, not even in practice."

Weber didn't even know where to line up; he was confused enough that he briefly considered calling timeout. Clements kept yelling at him to move out wider. After the ball was snapped, Weber was, as he put it, "wide stinking open in the back of the end zone." But perhaps Clements realized how green Weber was, because he threw incomplete to a running back. Notre Dame kicked a field goal to take the lead.

The Irish defense stopped Alabama, but a 65-yard punt by Greg Gantt pinned the Notre Dame offense at its own 1-yard line. A first down would allow them to run out the clock. On third-and-7, after a 5-yard penalty for a false start, Weber was in again when the call came in for a pass.

The play: "I get down in a huddle, Tom calls a play and it's me going deep. I'm like 'What? Wait a minute!'" he says. "The concept of the play was I run a flag, and Dave Casper is supposed to come underneath."

At least it was a simple route. "I used to do that in sandlot football —'Weber, go deep.'" If Weber drew coverage out of the middle of the field, that would leave Casper, the team captain who would eventually be inducted into the college and pro football halls of fame, open.

Even though Weber, now a real estate agent in Dallas, wasn't used often, he was a formidable target. He was 6'5", 265 pounds, and fast. He fired untouched off the line. "I'm running at this defensive back. I'll never forget this for as long as I live: This guy's looking in the backfield and sees me coming at him. This guy's eyes are as big as silver dollars. This guy thought he was about to get hammered. I deked inside of him and blew past him. Their safety was playing center field off to my right about 20 yards away, and he's backpedaling. To the left, there ain't nothing. I'm going, 'Whoa! Yeah!'

"I turned on the jets. I said, 'If I break here, there's no way this guy's going to catch me.' So I broke, and I'm smoking toward the sidelines. I didn't see Tom throw it, because there was a guy jumping in front of him. But I saw the ball get launched. I'm going, 'All I have to do is catch it, because I ain't going to get hit.'" He caught it and was forced out of bounds into the Alabama sideline for a 36-yard gain. "You know what was really cool about it?" Weber says. "We put it right down their stovepipe. It was right in front of them."

He was so close to Bryant that the legendary coach could have reached out and slapped the ball if he wanted to. "All those guys were cussing. The crowd's going crazy. I'm looking for flags. I see it's good, so I toss the ball to the refs and start jumping up and down, because I know it's checkmate."

The offense ran out the clock for the team's first national championship in seven years.

The aftermath: This is one of those strange plays about which the details sometimes get confused, like how people often think the U.S. beat Russia in hockey to win gold in the 1980 Winter Olympics when in fact that win merely allowed the team to advance to the gold medal game. In this case, fans often think Casper caught the pass. Weber jokes that's because Casper tells people he caught it. "If I had dropped that ball and we had gone on to lose that game, I would have blamed it on Dave Casper," Weber says. "I'd also be the governor of Alabama for the 40th straight year."

The player: ARKANSAS RUNNING BACK ROLAND SALES

The game: Orange Bowl, Jan. 2, 1978. Arkansas defeats Oklahoma, 31–6 and Sales gains 205 rushing yards, an Orange Bowl record.

The backstory: Ten days before the Orange Bowl against second-ranked Oklahoma, Arkansas coach Lou Holtz suspended running back Ben Cowins, fullback Michael Forrest and wide receiver Donny Bobo.

"It was hard to play for him," Sales says of Holtz. "He's a jokester on TV, but he's real tough. He'll start practice all the way over halfway through because he didn't like what he saw. That built our strength and energy throughout his tenure while he was there. … He was a good guy. He wanted to win. We respected him for that."

Oklahoma and Arkansas were both 10–1 and had lost to the same team, No. 1-ranked Texas. The sixth-ranked Razorbacks were 18-point underdogs before the suspensions were announced. By game time, that number had jumped to 24. Sales says that the team had been underrated all season long and was solid on both sides of the ball. "We were respected everywhere except the media," he says. "Back in that time, it was the East Coast teams that were rated high."

As if the suspension of three key players weren't bad enough, Sales was sick leading up to the game. He lost five pounds. "Three days before the game, my flu broke, and I started to be able to practice a little bit better," he says. "But I was really, really not well. The coaches were really worried about me not being able to play. I let them know, whatever I had, I would leave on the field."

The play: Sales' place in Arkansas football history is more about an entire performance rather than a single play. He ran for 205 yards on 22 carries and picked up another 52 yards on four catches and scored two touchdowns. Asked if one play stands out, he doesn't hesitate: a 36-yard run late in the fourth quarter. Sales didn't know this at the time, but he was close to breaking the Orange Bowl record. Someone told Holtz that, so the coach kept calling Sales' number even after the game was out of reach. After Sales broke the record, Holtz pulled his first-string offense.

The aftermath: Sales' Orange Bowl rushing record stood for 20 years until it was broken by Nebraska's Ahman Green.

FCS PREVIEW

By Craig Haley



1. NORTH DAKOTA STATE

(14-1, 7-1 Missouri Valley)

The defending FCS champion Bison, winners of six of the last seven national titles, seek to break their tie with Georgia Southern for the most FCS championships of all time. Coach Chris Klieman, who has led the Bison to three of those titles and been a part of all six, brings back seven starters on both sides of the ball as well as All-America defensive end Greg Menard, who missed last season with an ACL tear. The nation's best defense also features sophomore linebacker Jabril Cox and strong safety Robbie Grimsley, who leads a deep and talented secondary. The offense overflows with seniors, led by quarterback Easton Stick, who's 34–3 as a starter in his career, and running backs Bruce Anderson and Lance Dunn, who both could surpass 1,000 rushing yards. The Missouri Valley title race might be a mere formality with the Bison seeking their eighth in a row. Plus, with seven of their 11 regular-season games at the Fargodome, the Bison should gain home-field advantage in the playoffs again. Dynasty, indeed.

2. JAMES MADISON

(14-1, 8-0 CAA)

The 2016 national champ and 2017 runner-up lost more key players in the offseason than North Dakota State, but the Dukes are a clear notch above the next tier of contenders. Whoever takes over at quarterback — likely two-year backup Cole Johnson or Pittsburgh transfer Ben DiNucci — is surrounded by terrific skill players, including running backs Marcus Marshall, Trai Sharp and Cardon Johnson and wide receiver Riley Stapleton. The defense must retool, but it could have the nation's best set of cornerbacks in seniors Jimmy Moreland and Rashad Robinson.

3. NEW HAMPSHIRE

(9-5, 5-3 CAA)

In coach Sean McDonnell's 20th season, the Wildcats expect to make a deep run in what would be their 15th straight playoff appearance. Last year's national quarterfinals team returns 18 starters. QB Trevor Knight (3,433 yards, 26 TDs) has go-to targets in Neil O'Connor (97 receptions, 1,396 yards, 10 TDs) and Malik Love, but the offensive line must do a better job with pass protection. An improved run game will make a difference. The 4-2-5 defense features linebackers Quinlen Dean, the team's leading tackler, and Jared Kuehl, plus cornerback Prince Smith Jr.

MUST-SEE MATCHUPS

Aug. 25	Jacksonville State vs. North Carolina A&T (Montgomery, Ala.)
Sept. 1	Northern Iowa at Montana
Sept. 22	Delaware at North Dakota State
Sept. 22	Sam Houston State at Nicholls
Sept. 29	South Dakota State at North Dakota State
Oct. 13	James Madison at Villanova
Oct. 13	Eastern Washington at Weber State
Nov. 3	James Madison at New Hampshire
Nov. 3	Wofford at Samford
Nov. 17	Jacksonville State vs. Kennesaw State (Atlanta)

AP

4. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE

(11-3, 6-2 Missouri Valley)

While the losses of tight end Dallas Goedert and wide receiver Jake Wieneke are significant, the Jackrabbits, coming off their first run to the national semifinals, remain formidable. As senior quarterback Taryn Christion seeks new targets, coach John Stiegelmeier's team will have a physical run game behind backs Isaac Wallace and Mikey Daniel. The defense will be improved, led by linebacker Christian Rozeboom, the team leader in tackles in each of his first two seasons. The Jackrabbits also boast one of the nation's best placekickers in Chase Vinatieri, the nephew of NFL great Adam Vinatieri.

5. KENNESAW STATE

(12-3, 5-0 Big South)

With most of the key players returning, the fourth-year Big South program could surpass last year's surprising run to the national quarterfinals. Senior quarterback Chandler Burks is the first option (literally) on the nation's No. 1-ranked rushing attack, but running backs Jake McKenzie, Shaquil Terry and Darnell Holland also went over 725 yards. Defensive end Desmond Johnson is a one-man wrecking crew, and linebacker Bryson Armstrong won the Jerry Rice Award as the FCS National Freshman of the Year. The schedule gets much tougher and will include the Owls' two playoff victims, Samford and Jacksonville State.

6. EASTERN WASHINGTON

(7-4, 6-2 Big Sky)

After four finishes in the national top-four rankings from 2012-16, the Eagles were left on the playoff sideline last season. The disappointment motivates second-year coach Aaron Best's team, which is armed with senior quarterback Gage Gubrud, who ranked No. 2 nationally in total offense (357.8 ypg) even in a subpar season. Nsimba Webster is the go-to receiver, and running back Antoine Custer Jr. will keep defenses honest. The team's top five tacklers welcome back defensive tackle Jay-Tee Tiuli from injury.

7. SAM HOUSTON STATE

(12-2, 8-1 Southland)

Two-time Walter Payton Award winner Jeremiah Briscoe is gone, but transfer quarterback Mike Dare steps into an offense that boasts wide receivers Nathan Stewart and Davion Davis, who combined for 150 receptions, 2,854 receiving yards and 31 TD catches last season. Defensive end Chris Stewart also puts up big numbers for a program that's been to five semifinals in the last seven seasons.

FCS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE

QB	Gage Gubrud	6-2/205/Sr.	Eastern Washington
RB	Bruce Anderson	5-11/216/Sr.	North Dakota State
RB	Dom Bragalone	5-11/230/Sr.	Lehigh
FB	Cal Daniels	6-2/255/Sr.	Stony Brook
WR	Keelan Doss	6-3/210/Sr.	UC Davis
WR	Nathan Stewart	5-11/175/Jr.	Sam Houston State
TE	Logan Parker	6-4/250/Sr.	Southern Utah
C	Zach Larsen	6-1/300/Jr.	Southern Utah
OL	Larry Allen III	6-4/285/Sr.	Harvard
OL	B.J. Autry	6-5/340/Sr.	Jacksonville State
OL	Daniel Cooney	6-8/315/Sr.	San Diego
OL	Iosua Opeta	6-4/295/Sr.	Weber State

DEFENSE

DL	Miles Brown	6-2/320/Sr.	Wofford
DL	Andrew Clyde	6-3/275/Sr.	Richmond
DL	Ahmad Gooden	6-1/240/Sr.	Samford
DL	Chris Terrell	6-3/266/Jr.	Central Arkansas
LB	Bryson Armstrong	5-11/205/So.	Kennesaw State
LB	Warren Messer	5-11/230/Sr.	Elon
LB	Christian Rozeboom	6-2/230/Jr.	South Dakota State
DB	Marlon Bridges	6-0/200/Jr.	Jacksonville State
DB	Robbie Grimsley	6-0/191/Sr.	North Dakota State
DB	Rashad Robinson	5-11/182/Sr.	James Madison
DB	Rob Rolle	6-0/185 Sr.	Villanova

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	Lorran Fonseca	5-11/185/Sr.	Nicholls
P	Ian Berryman	6-0/205/Sr.	Western Carolina
KR	Juwan Petit-Frere	5-7/170/Jr.	SE Louisiana
PR	Justice Shelton-Mosley	5-10/195/Sr.	Harvard

PROJECTED PLAYOFF QUALIFIERS

AUSTIN PEAY
(At-Large)

COLGATE
(At-Large)

DUQUESNE
(Northeast Champ)

EASTERN WASHINGTON
(Big Sky Champ)

DELAWARE
(At-Large)

ELON
(At-Large)

ILLINOIS STATE
(At-Large)

JACKSONVILLE STATE
(Ohio Valley Champ)

JAMES MADISON
(CAA Champ)

KENNESAW STATE
(Big South Champ)

MCNEESE
(At-Large)

MONTANA
(At-Large)

NEW HAMPSHIRE
(At-Large)

NICHOLLS
(At-Large)

NORTH DAKOTA STATE
(Missouri Valley Champ)

NORTHERN IOWA
(At-Large)

SAMFORD
(Southern Champ)

SAM HOUSTON STATE
(Southland Champ)

SAN DIEGO
(Pioneer Champ)

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
(At-Large)

VILLANOVA
(At-Large)

WEBER STATE
(At-Large)

8. JACKSONVILLE STATE

(10-2, 8-0 OVC)

The Gamecocks aren't resting on a 32-game winning streak in the Ohio Valley Conference; they're seeking a sixth consecutive season with at least 10 wins. Coach John Grass has brought in Clemson transfer Zerrick Cooper to battle all-conference quarterback Bryant Horn and keep the offense moving. Plenty was lost defensively, but junior safety Marlon Bridges returns as an anchor.

9. WEBER STATE

(11-3, 7-1 Big Sky)

It will be hard for the Wildcats to improve on their best-ever season, including a near upset of James Madison in the national quarterfinals. With a new quarterback stepping into the huddle, running backs Treshawn Garrett and Kevin Smith and wide receiver Rashid Shaheed will be counted on for big seasons. Linebacker LeGrand Toia and defensive end Adam Rodriguez provide excellent production in the front seven.

10. ELON

(8-4, 6-2 CAA)

After whetting their appetite with a playoff appearance in coach Curt Cignetti's first season, the young Phoenix are all grown up with 18 returning starters. Still, losses in their final three games indicate there's a need for a finishing touch. Quarterback Davis Cheek, the CAA Offensive Freshman of the Year, will spread the ball between running backs Malcolm Summers and De'Sean McNair and wide receiver Kortez Weeks. Linebacker Warren Messer fills the stat sheet.

11. VILLANOVA

(5-6, 3-5 CAA)

Improved health will lead to a much-improved record for the Wildcats. Quarterback Zach Bednarczyk, running back Matt Gudzak, wide receiver Changa Hodge and All-America safety Rob Rolle were among the key players whose seasons were cut short last year. Add in the development of linebacker Jeff Steeb, and coach Mark Ferrante's second season will go more smoothly.



JOE NEWMAN, WOFFORD

12. SAMFORD

(8-4, 6-2 Southern)

Two of the nation's better players, quarterback Devlin Hodges and defensive end Ahmad Gooden, will fuel the Bulldogs. Hodges has racked up 11,005 yards of total offense in his career, while Gooden totaled 15.5 tackles for a loss as a junior. All 11 starters return on offense, and one of them, senior wide receiver Kelvin McKnight, will challenge for 100 receptions.

13. DELAWARE

(7-4, 5-3 CAA)

Mired in a playoff drought since 2010, the Blue Hens' tradition-rich program is anxious for a return following its three-game improvement in coach Danny Rocco's first season. The defense can get it done as it features linebackers Troy Reeder and Charles Bell and safety Nasir Adderley. But the offense remains under the microscope, although returning quarterback J.P. Caruso was 4-2 as a starter.

14. ILLINOIS STATE

(6-5, 4-4 Missouri Valley)

A bounce-back season seems likely for a Redbirds team that fell short of a fourth straight playoff appearance. In the rugged Missouri Valley, senior quarterback Jake Kolbe must play with more consistency, but running backs James Robinson and Markel Smith provide a 1-2 punch. On defense, linebacker Tyree Horton is back as the team's leading tackler.

15. NICHOLLS

(8-4, 7-2 Southland)

Opponents will have a hard time slowing a Colonels offense that features quarterback Chase Fourcade, running back Kyran Irvin and wide receiver Damion Jeanpiere. When they don't reach the end zone, All-America placekicker Lorran Fonseca will pick up the pieces. Defensive linemen Kenny Dotson and Sully Laiche are at the front of what should be a much-improved defense.

16. WOFFORD

(10-3, 7-1 Southern)

Following long-time coach Mike Ayers' retirement, former assistant Josh Conklin, who spent the last three seasons as Pittsburgh's defensive coordinator, has taken the reins. He knows to keep running the triple-option offense, which features quarterback Joe Newman and veteran backs Andre Stoddard, Lennox McAfee and Blake Morgan. Burly defensive lineman Miles Brown (6'2", 320) is a force.

17. MCNEESE

(9-2, 7-2 Southland)

No other eligible team left out of the playoffs had as many wins as the Cowboys. They plan to rectify that behind senior quarterback James Tabary, who's thrown 44 TDs over the last two seasons, and a deep running back unit. While the defense led the FCS against the run, it lost some key players. Safety BJ Blunt is the leader.

Wofford: AP; Sandy: Montana Athletics; Blackman: Central Arkansas Athletics

18. MONTANA

(7-4, 5-3 Big Sky)

Griz fans hope that the return of coach Bobby Hauck, who went 80-17 and led three FCS runner-up finishes from 2003-09, will return the longtime Big Sky power to national prominence. Quarterback Gresch Jensen, who threw for 20 touchdowns as a freshman, will look to keep connecting with wide receivers Keenan Curran and Jerry Louie-McGhee. Linebacker Josh Buss is primed for a banner senior season, and safety Josh Sandry returns after intercepting three passes.



JOSH SANDRY, MONTANA

19. NORTHERN IOWA

(8-5, 6-2 Missouri Valley)

On a playoff team that lost a lot of standouts, getting senior quarterback Eli Dunne (2,704 yards, 26 TDs) and running back Marcus Weymiller back is a good start to having another strong season. Senior linebacker Rickey Neal (9.5 sacks) is one of the fiercest pass rushers in the Missouri Valley.

20. NORTH CAROLINA A&T

(12-0, 8-0 MEAC)

First-time head coach Sam Washington, the Aggies' former defensive coordinator, has taken over last year's only unbeaten FCS team, which won MEAC and Celebration Bowl titles. No team in the conference can match the offensive firepower of MEAC Offensive Player of the Year Lamar Raynard (2,932 passing yards, 31 total TDs) and running back Marquell Cartwright (1,190 yards, 14 TDs).

21. YOUNGSTOWN STATE

(6-5, 4-4 Missouri Valley)

Coach Bo Pelini's 2016 national runners-up seek to get back on track. Senior running back Tevin McCaster (1,066 yards, 13 TDs) has a nose for the end zone, and quarterback Nathan Mays should be improved in his second season as the starter. The Penguins are always physical, and defensive end Justus Reed and linebacker Armand Dellovade set that tone on defense.

22. AUSTIN PEAY

(8-4, 7-1 Ohio Valley)

Last year's biggest surprise — the Governors overcame a 29-game losing streak and losses in 47 of 48 games — will threaten Jacksonville State's dominance in the OVC. Eddie Robinson Award-winning coach Will Healy has two quality quarterbacks (Jeremiah Oatsvall and JaVaughn Craig) and running backs (Kentel Williams and Ahmaad Tanner). Defensive end Jaison Williams is a premier pass rusher.

23. SACRAMENTO STATE

(7-4, 6-2 Big Sky)

Expectations are sky high after the Hornets improved by five wins under coach Jody Sears, who was rewarded with a contract extension. Dynamic quarterback Kevin Thomson, who accounted for 26 touchdowns in eight games, has to remain healthy for the full season. Defensive end George Obinna and safety Mister Harriel are difference makers on an experienced defense.



CARLOS BLACKMAN, CENTRAL ARKANSAS

24. CENTRAL ARKANSAS

(10-2, 9-0 Southland)

New coach Nathan Brown, a former Bears quarterback who's been elevated from offensive coordinator, knows to pound the rock with running backs Carlos Blackman and Kierre Crossley. Graduation has made the secondary vulnerable, but the pass rush of defensive tackle Chris Terrell (20 tackles for a loss, 11 sacks) will help temper the losses.

25. STONY BROOK

(10-3, 7-1 CAA)

While quarterback Joe Carbone was one of the more improved players in the FCS last season, the Seawolves will have to overcome key losses offensively. Senior Jordan Gowins will step into the role of featured running back. The Seawolves will be led by their defense, which this season features defensive end John Haggart and linebackers Shayne Lawless and Noah McGinty.

OTHERS TO WATCH:

Idaho (4-8 FBS)
Monmouth (9-3, 4-1 Big South)
Montana State (5-6, 5-3 Big Sky)
Northern Arizona (7-5, 6-2 Big Sky)
South Dakota (8-5, 4-4 MVC)
Western Illinois (8-4, 5-3 MVC)
Yale (9-1, 6-1 Ivy)

Recruiting

2018 Signees

1.	Trevor Lawrence	Cartersville (Cartersville, GA)	QB	6-6	208	Clemson
2.	Justin Fields	Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)	QB	6-3	221	Georgia
3.	Xavier Thomas	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-3	260	Clemson
4.	Eyabi Anoma	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DE	6-5	235	Alabama
5.	Micah Parsons	Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA)	DE	6-3	235	Penn State
6.	Patrick Surtain Jr.	American Heritage (For Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-1	199	Alabama
7.	Nicholas Petit-Frere	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-6	272	Ohio State
8.	Justin Shorter	South Brunswick (Momnouth Junction, NJ)	WR	6-4	213	Penn State
9.	Zamir White	Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)	RB	6-1	220	Georgia
10.	Jamaree Salyer	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	OG	6-4	342	Georgia
11.	Amon-Ra St. Brown	Mater Del (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-0	191	USC
12.	Tyson Campbell	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-3	180	Georgia
13.	Terrace Marshall	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	WR	6-3	192	LSU
14.	KJ Henry	West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC)	DE	6-6	235	Clemson
15.	Palaie Gaoteote	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	LB	6-2	235	USC
16.	JT Daniels	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	QB	6-2	205	USC



17.	Jackson Carman	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	OT	6-6	330	Clemson
18.	Adam Anderson	Rome (Rome, GA)	LB	6-4	214	Georgia
19.	Caden Sterns	Steele (Cibolo, TX)	S	6-1	192	Texas
20.	Taron Vincent	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DT	6-2	285	Ohio State
21.	Tyreke Johnson	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	S	6-1	191	Ohio State
22.	Cade Mays	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	OT	6-6	318	Georgia
23.	Brenton Cox	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	DE	6-5	247	Georgia
24.	BJ Foster	Angleton (Angleton, TX)	S	6-1	188	Texas
25.	Lorenzo Lingard	University (Orange City, FL)	RB	6-0	190	Miami (Fla.)
26.	Derion Kendrick	South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC)	WR	6-1	184	Clemson
27.	Ricky Slade	C.D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA)	RB	5-9	185	Penn State
28.	Olaijah Griffin	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	CB	6-0	170	USC
29.	Brey Walker	Westmoore (Moore, OK)	OT	6-7	320	Oklahoma
30.	Jaelen Gill	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	RB	6-1	182	Ohio State
31.	Quay Walker	Crisp County (Cordele, GA)	LB	6-4	236	Georgia
32.	Isaac Taylor-Stuart	Helix (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	187	USC
33.	Brevin Jordan	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	TE	6-3	250	Miami (Fla.)
34.	Tyreke Smith	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	DE	6-3	204	Ohio State
35.	Jaiden Woodbey	St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA)	S	6-2	204	Florida State
36.	Dorian Thompson-Robinson	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	QB	6-2	195	UCLA
37.	Jeremy Ruckert	Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY)	TE	6-6	238	Ohio State
38.	Brendan Radley-Hiles	IMG Academy (Brandenton, FL)	CB	5-10	183	Oklahoma
39.	Jaylen Waddle	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	WR	5-10	175	Alabama
40.	Devon Williams	Antelope Valley (Lancaster, CA)	WR	6-4	200	USC
41.	James Cook	Northwestern (Miami, FL)	RB	6-0	181	Georgia



Trevor Lawrence

42.	Kelvin Joseph	Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)	S	6-2	191	LSU
43.	Justin Rogers	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	QB	6-4	210	TCU
44.	Teradja Mitchell	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	LB	6-2	232	Ohio State
45.	Justyn Ross	Central (Phenix City, AL)	WR	6-4	201	Clemson
46.	Tanner McKee	Centennial (Corona, CA)	QB	6-6	220	Stanford
47.	Jalen Green	Heights (Houston, TX)	CB	6-0	171	Texas
48.	JJ Peterson	Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)	LB	6-3	231	Tennessee
49.	Joey Gatewood	Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)	ATH	6-4	232	Auburn
50.	Anthony Lytton	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	CB	5-10	173	Florida State
51.	Luke Ford	Carterville (Carterville, IL)	TE	6-6	248	Georgia
52.	DeMarvion Overshown	Arp (Arp, TX)	S	6-4	200	Texas
53.	William Barnes	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	OT	6-4	325	UNC
54.	Nesta Silvera	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DT	6-2	308	Miami (Fla.)
55.	Tommy Togiai	Highland (Pocatello, ID)	DT	6-3	290	Ohio State
56.	Kyler McMichael	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	CB	6-1	201	Clemson
57.	Penei Sewell	Desert Hills (Saint George, Utah)	OG	6-5	349	Oregon
58.	Jordyn Adams	Green Hope (Cary,NC)	WR	6-2	175	UNC
59.	Marquis Spiker	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	WR	6-3	180	Washington
60.	Asante Samuel Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	5-10	166	Florida State
61.	Brennan Eagles	Alief Taylor (Houston, TX)	WR	6-4	214	Texas
62.	Trey Hill	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	OG	6-4	346	Georgia
63.	Matt Corral	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	QB	6-2	202	Ole Miss
64.	Anthony Cook	Lamar (Houston, TX)	CB	6-0	168	Texas
65.	Rasheed Walker	North Point (Waldorf, MD)	OT	6-6	290	Penn State
66.	Ronnie Perkins	Lutheran North (St. Louis, MO)	DE	6-3	256	Oklahoma
67.	Mark Pope	Miami Southridge (Hialeah, FL)	WR	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
68.	Matthew Jones	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	OC	6-4	300	Ohio State
69.	Jacob Copeland	Escambia (Pensacola, FL)	WR	6-0	192	Florida
70.	Houston Griffith	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	CB	6-1	192	Notre Dame
71.	Josh Proctor	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	S	6-2	190	Ohio State
72.	Michael Thompson	Parkway North (St. Louis, MO)	DT	6-4	291	Oklahoma
73.	Kamryn Babb	Christian Brothers (St. Louis, MO)	WR	6-1	189	Ohio State
74.	Stephon Wynn	IMG Academy (Anderson, SC)	DE	6-4	308	Alabama
75.	Leon O'Neal Jr.	Cy Springs (Cypress, TX)	S	6-1	190	Texas A&M

AP

Rankings provided by 247COMPOSITE

76.	Jayson Oweh	Blair Academy (Blairstown, NJ)	DE	6-5	236	Penn State
77.	Jarren Williams	Central Gwinnett (Lawrenceville, GA)	QB	6-2	206	Miami (Fla.)
78.	PJ Mustipher	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DT	6.5	290	Penn State
79.	Payton Wilson	Orange (Hillsborough, NC)	LB	6-4	225	NC State
80.	Brian Snead	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	RB	5-11	200	Ohio State
81.	Richard Gouraige	Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-5	271	Florida
82.	Kevin Austin	North Broward Prep (Pompano Beach, FL)	WR	6-3	198	Notre Dame
83.	Phil Jurkovec	Pine-Richland (Gibsonia, PA)	QB	6-5	215	Notre Dame
84.	Ja'Marr Chase	Archbishop Rummel (Metairie, LA)	WR	6-1	195	LSU
85.	Emory Jones	Heard County (Franklin, GA)	QB	6-3	195	Florida
86.	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	LB	6-2	220	USC
87.	Otis Reese	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	LB	6-4	206	Georgia
88.	Talanoa Hufanga	Crescent Valley (Corvallis, OR)	ATH	6-1	193	USC
89.	Justin Watkins	East Ridge (Clermont, FL)	WR	5-11	172	Florida
90.	Shayne Simon	St. Peters Prep (Jersey City, NJ)	LB	6-3	215	Notre Dame
91.	Colson Yankoff	Coeur d'Alene (Coeur d'Alene, ID)	QB	6-4	204	Washington
92.	Matthew Hill	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	WR	6-2	185	Auburn
93.	Tyler Friday	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	DT	6-3	263	Ohio State
94.	Jacob Sirmon	Bothell (Bothell, WA)	QB	6-4	227	Washington
95.	Jalen Preston	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	WR	6-2	212	Texas A&M
96.	Joshua Moore	Yoakum (Yoakum, TX)	WR	6-1	170	Texas
97.	Al Blades Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-0	170	Miami (Fla.)
98.	Bryan Addison	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	ATH	6-5	180	UCLA
99.	Jack Lamb	Great Oak (Temecula, CA)	LB	6-4	220	Notre Dame
100.	T.J. Pledger	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	RB	5-8	190	Oklahoma
101.	Ron Tatum	Putnam City (Oklahoma City, OK)	DE	6.5	269	Oklahoma



T.J. Pledger

102.	Josh Belk	Lewisville (Richburg, SC)	DT	6-3	309	Clemson
103.	Channing Tindall	Spring Valley (Columbia, SC)	LB	6-2	213	Georgia
104.	Al'Vonte Woodard	Lamar (Houston, TX)	WR	6-1	193	Texas
105.	Tuli Letuligasenoa	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	DT	6-1	338	Washington
106.	Derrik Allen	Lassiter (Marietta, GA)	S	6-2	211	Notre Dame
107.	Jalyn Armour-Davis	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	CB	6-1	180	Alabama
108.	Jordan Davis	Southwind (Memphis, TN)	DE	6-5	238	Alabama
109.	Josh Jobe	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	CB	6-1	180	Alabama
110.	Justin Dedich	Chaparral (Temecula, CA)	OC	6-2	290	USC
111.	Ricky Person	Heritage (Wake Forest, NC)	RB	6-2	202	NC State
112.	Aidan Hutchinson	Divine Child (Dearborn, MI)	DE	6-6	260	Michigan
113.	Emil Ekiyor	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	OC	6-2	322	Alabama
114.	Mario Goodrich	Lee's Summit West (Lees Summit, MO)	ATH	6-2	180	Clemson
115.	D'Shawn Jamison	Lamar (Houston, TX)	CB	5-10	174	Texas
116.	Nana Asiedu	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	OT	6-5	265	Penn State
117.	Robert Cooper	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DT	6-2	377	Florida State
118.	Cameron McGrone	Lawrence Central (Indianapolis, IN)	LB	6-1	215	Michigan

119.	Ayodele Adeoye	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-0	231	Texas
120.	Coynis Miller	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, Alabama)	DT	6-2	300	Auburn
121.	Max Wray	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	289	Ohio State
122.	Alontae Taylor	Coffee County Central (Manchester, TN)	WR	6-0	184	Tennessee
123.	Keondre Coburn	Westfield (Houston, TX)	DT	6-1	329	Texas
124.	Dante Stills	Fairmont (Fairmont, WV)	DE	6-4	265	West Virginia
125.	Junior Angilau	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	OT	6-6	297	Texas
126.	L'Christian Smith	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	ATH	6-6	205	Ohio State
127.	Jalen Hall	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	WR	6-4	192	Oregon
128.	Jayson Ademilola	St. Peters Prep (Jersey City, NJ)	DT	6-3	290	Notre Dame
129.	Merlin Robertson	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	LB	6-3	241	Arizona State
130.	Kearis Jackson	Peach County (Fort Valley, GA)	WR	6-0	203	Georgia
131.	Cameron Latu	Olympus (Salt Lake City, UT)	DE	6-5	236	Alabama
132.	Tommy Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	OG	6-7	313	Alabama
133.	Brandon Kaho	Reno (Reno, NV)	LB	6-1	218	Washington
134.	Aashari Crosswell	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	S	6-1	185	Arizona State
135.	Jalen Redmond	Midwest City (Oklahoma City, OK)	DE	6-4	233	Oklahoma
136.	Greg Emerson	North Side (Jackson, TN)	DT	6-3	280	Tennessee
137.	Steve Stephens	Edison (Fresno, CA)	S	6-0	185	Oregon
138.	Chase Williams	Eleanor Roosevelt (Corona, CA)	CB	6-1	190	USC
139.	Adrian Martinez	Clovis West (Fresno, CA)	QB	6-2	205	Nebraska
140.	Tyler Shough	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	QB	6.5	187	Oregon
141.	Rick Sandidge	Concord (Concord, NC)	DT	6-5	285	South Carolina
142.	Justin Mascoll	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DE	6-4	237	Clemson
143.	Xavier Williams	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	WR	6-1	190	Alabama
144.	Azeez Ojulari	Marietta (Marietta, GA)	DE	6-4	224	Georgia
145.	Jaelyn Duncan	St. Frances Academy (Owings, MD)	OT	6-6	300	Maryland
146.	Josh Vann	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	WR	5-11	175	South Carolina
147.	CJ Moore	Union (Tulsa, OK)	WR	6-5	175	Okla. State
148.	Dylan Wonnum	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	OT	6-5	323	South Carolina
149.	Delone Scaife	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	OG	6-3	320	Miami (Fla.)
150.	Zack Kuntz	Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA)	TE	6-7	221	Penn State



Jalyn Armour-Davis

Delone Scaife

151.	Dax Hollifield	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	LB	6-2	236	Virginia Tech
152.	Harold Joiner	Mountain Brook (Birmingham, AL)	RB	6-3	218	Auburn
153.	Colten Blanton	Cy Ranch (Cypress, TX)	OT	6-7	285	Texas A&M
154.	Brian Hightower	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-3	202	Miami (Fla.)
155.	Raymond Scott	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	LB	6-2	220	USC
156.	Julius Irvin	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	S	6-1	177	Washington
157.	Warren Thompson	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	WR	6-3	200	Florida State
158.	Smoke Monday	Carver (Atlanta, FL)	ATH	6-3	185	Auburn
159.	Chase Cota	South Medford (Medford, OR)	WR	6.4	195	UCLA
160.	Austin Fontaine	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	DT	6-3	309	Maryland
161.	Tre'Shaun Harrison	Garfield (Seattle, WA)	ATH	6-2	190	Florida State
162.	Kyle Pitts	Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA)	TE	6-6	235	Florida
163.	Anthony Schwartz	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	WR	6-0	172	Auburn
164.	Keaontay Ingram	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	RB	6-1	190	Texas
165.	Jevon Holland	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	S	6-1	182	Oregon
166.	Dallas Gant	St. John's Jesuit (Toledo, OH)	LB	6-3	225	Ohio State
167.	Jack Tuttle	Mission Hills (San Marcos, CA)	QB	6-4	195	Utah
168.	Mustapha Muhammad	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	TE	6-4	235	Michigan
169.	Adrian Jackson	Mullen (Denver, CO)	LB	6-2	210	Oregon
170.	Myles Sims	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	CB	6-3	173	Michigan
171.	Spencer Sanders	Ryan (Denton, TX)	QB	6-2	190	Okla. State
172.	Malik Heath	Callaway (Jackson, MS)	WR	6-3	205	Miss. State
173.	Camron Davis	Miami Carol City (Opa Locka, FL)	RB	5-10	190	Miami (Fla.)
174.	Xavier Peters	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	LB	6-4	225	Florida State
175.	Nadab Joseph	Miami Norland HS (Miami, FL)	CB	6-2	180	Georgia
176.	Christian Barmore	Neumann Goretti (Philadelphia, PA)	DT	6-5	290	Alabama



Brian Hightower



Dax Hollifield

177.	Devonta Jason	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	WR	6-3	211	Miss. State
178.	Amari Burney	Calvary Christian (Clearwater, FL)	S	6-1	215	Florida
179.	Isaah Crocker	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	WR	6-1	175	Oregon
180.	Tre Turner	Northwest Guilford (Greensboro, NC)	WR	6-4	185	Virginia Tech
181.	Dyami Brown	West Meckenburg (Charlotte, NC)	ATH	6-2	180	UNC
182.	Bobby Brown	Lamar (Arlington, TX)	DT	6-4	282	Texas A&M
183.	Jaquayln Crawford	Rockdale (Rockdale, TX)	ATH	5-10	161	Oklahoma
184.	Gurvan Hall	Palm Beach Gardens (West Palm Beach, FL)	S	5-11	173	Miami (Fla.)
185.	Seth Williams	Paul W Bryant (Cottondale, AL)	WR	6-3	212	Auburn
186.	Joseph Ossai	Oak Ridge (Conroe, TX)	DE	6-4	220	Texas
187.	Kyler Gordon	Archbishop Murphy (Everett, WA)	CB	5-11	177	Washington
188.	Kalon Gervin	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	CB	5-11	180	Michigan St.
189.	Atanza Vongor	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	S	6-1	200	TCU

190.	Max Wright	Taylor (Katy, TX)	DE	6-4	270	Texas A&M
191.	Alim McNeill	Sanderson (Raleigh, NC)	DT	6-2	272	NC State
192.	Jahan Dotson	Nazareth (Nazareth, PA)	WR	5-11	165	Penn State
193.	Cameron Jurgens	Beatrice (Beatrice, NE)	TE	6-3	240	Nebraska
194.	Marquan McCall	Oak Park (Oak Park, MI)	OG	6-4	320	Kentucky
195.	Trey Dean	Dutchtown (Hampton, GA)	S	6-2	180	Florida
196.	Tommy Bush	Samuel Clemens (Schertz, TX)	WR	6-5	191	Georgia
197.	Zakoby McClain	Valdosta (Valdosta, GA)	LB	6-0	205	Auburn
198.	Jarell Cherry	Carter (Dallas, TX)	DE	6-3	224	LSU
199.	Kwantel Raines	Aliquippa (Aliquippa, PA)	S	6-3	200	West Virginia
200.	Gilbert Frierson	Coral Gables Senior (Miami, FL)	CB	6-1	185	Miami (Fla.)
201.	Dameon Pierce	Bainbridge (Bainbridge, GA)	RB	5-11	205	Florida
202.	Asa Martin	Austin (Decatur, AL)	RB	6-0	200	Auburn
203.	Elijah Moore	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	WR	5-11	181	Ole Miss
204.	Joe Milton	Olympia (Orlando, FL)	QB	6-6	230	Michigan
205.	DaShaun White	Richland (North Richland Hills, TX)	LB	6-1	222	Oklahoma
206.	Dakereon Joyner	Fort Dorchester (North Charleston, SC)	QB	6-2	206	South Carolina
207.	Maurice Washington	Trinity Christian School (Cedar Hill, TX)	RB	6-1	190	Nebraska
208.	Sam Taimani	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	OG	6-2	320	Washington
209.	Jaycee Horn	Alpharetta (Alpharetta, GA)	CB	6-0	190	South Carolina
210.	Mike Jones Jr.	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-0	228	Clemson
211.	Will Mallory	Providence (Jacksonville, FL)	TE	6-5	207	Miami (Fla.)
212.	Austin Osborne	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	WR	6-2	188	Washington
213.	Andrew Chatfield	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DE	6-2	221	Florida
214.	Mychale Salahuddin	Woodson H.D. (Washington, DC)	RB	5-10	193	Pitt
215.	Braden Lenzy	Tigard (Portland, OR)	ATH	6-0	175	Notre Dame
216.	Calvin Avery	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	DT	6-2	310	Illinois
217.	K'Vaughan Pope	Dinwiddle County (Dinwiddle, VA)	LB	6-2	210	Ohio State
218.	Curtis Dunlap	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OG	6-4	368	Minnesota
219.	Javontae Jean-Baptiste	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	LB	6-5	215	Ohio State
220.	Nik Bonitto	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	LB	6-3	204	Oklahoma
221.	Sevyn Banks	Jones (Orlando, FL)	CB	6-1	180	Ohio State
222.	Malcolm Lamar	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	DE	6-5	250	Florida State
223.	Abdul-Malik McClain	J Serra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano, CA)	DE	6-4	230	USC
224.	Pat Freiermuth	Brooks School (North Andover, MA)	TE	6-5	250	Penn State
225.	Jordan Moore	Yoakum (Yoakum, TX)	S	5-11	192	Texas A&M

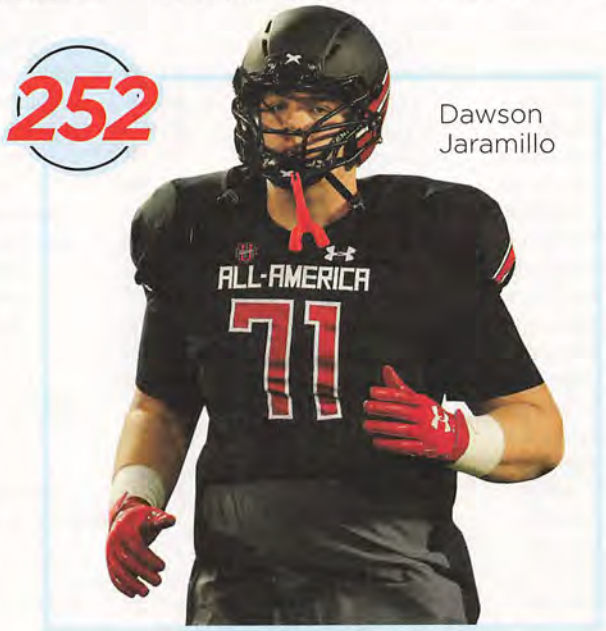
AP

226. Solomon Enis	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	WR	6-4	190	Utah
227. Malcolm Epps	Dekaney (Houston, TX)	TE	6-6	218	Texas
228. Master Teague	Blackman (Murfreesboro, TN)	RB	5-11	210	Ohio State
229. Rondale Moore	Trinity (Louisville, KY)	WR	5-9	174	Purdue
230. Jairus Brents	Waggener Traditional (Louisville, KY)	CB	5-10	178	Louisville
231. Isaiah Bolden	Wesley Chapel (Zephyrhills, FL)	CB	6-2	175	Florida State
232. Chris Murray	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	OG	6-3	300	UCLA
233. Frederick Scruggs	Cathedral Prep (Erie, PA)	OC	6-3	270	Penn State
234. Gerry Bohanon	Earle (Earle, AR)	QB	6-3	218	Baylor
235. Jack West	Saraland (Saraland, AL)	QB	6-4	217	Stanford
236. Trevor Trout	Chaminade (St. Louis, MO)	DT	6-3	315	USC
237. BJ Hanspard	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	ATH	6-0	170	Baylor
238. Jesse Luketa	Mercyhurst Preparatory School (Erie, PA)	LB	6-3	238	Penn State
239. Amari Gainer	Lawton Chiles (Tallahassee, FL)	LB	6-3	204	Florida State
240. Robert Hicks	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	LB	6-0	237	Louisville
241. Michael Wilson	Chaminade (West Hills, CA)	WR	6-2	180	Stanford
242. Divaad Wilson	Northwestern (Miami, FL)	CB	6-0	180	Georgia



243. Chasen Hines	Marshall (Marshall, TX)	DT	6-3	335	LSU
244. Spencer Webb	Christian Brothers (Sacramento, CA)	TE	6-5	235	Oregon
245. Alston Orji	Rockwall (Rockwall, TX)	LB	6-2	230	Vanderbilt
246. Steven Jones	Chaparral (Temecula, CA)	OG	6-5	340	Oregon
247. Cameron Rising	Newbury Park (Newbury, CA)	QB	6-2	209	Texas
248. Trey Lowe	Jesuit (Portland, OR)	RB	5-7	174	Washington
249. Tanner Mordecai	Midway (Waco, TX)	QB	6-3	213	Oklahoma
250. Trenton Gillison	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, Ohio)	TE	6-5	220	Mich. State
251. Bo Calvert	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	LB	6.4	218	UCLA
252. Dawson Jaramillo	Lake Oswego Senior (Lake Oswego, OR)	OT	6-5	295	Oregon
253. Tank Jenkins	Park Crossing (Montgomery, AL)	OG	6-3	325	Texas A&M
254. Jeremiah Martin	Cajon (San Bernardino, CA)	DE	6-5	240	Texas A&M
255. Stephan Blaylock	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	S	5-10	185	UCLA
256. Brant Lawless	Nashville Christian School (Nashville, TN)	DT	6-3	285	Tennessee
257. Jamien Sherwood	Jensen Beach (Jensen Beach, FL)	S	6-2	195	Auburn
258. Lyn-J Dixon	Taylor County (Butler, GA)	RB	5-11	178	Clemson
259. Cleveland Reed	Fort Meade (Fort Meade, FL)	OG	6-3	327	Miami (Fla.)
260. Michael Ezeike	Colony (Ontario, CA)	TE	6-5	220	UCLA

261. Jashaun Corbin	Rockledge (Rockledge, FL)	RB	6-0	191	Texas A&M
262. Andres Fox	Mobile Christian School (Mobile, AL)	DE	6-4	245	Stanford
263. Warren Ericson	North Gwinnett (Duluth, GA)	OC	6-4	290	Georgia
264. Camron Johnson	Brentwood Academy (Brentwood, TN)	WR	6-1	182	Vanderbilt
265. Darrell Simpson	Northwest (Justin, TX)	OT	6-7	336	Oklahoma
266. Joseph Scates	Dunbar (Dayton, OH)	WR	6-3	180	Iowa State
267. Tevailance Hunt	Texas High (Texarkana, TX)	WR	6-2	185	TCU
268. Jalen Mayfield	Catholic Central (Grand Rapids, MI)	OT	6-5	273	Michigan
269. Kingsley Enagbare	Hapeville Charter (Atlanta, GA)	DE	6-4	257	South Carolina
270. Nick Tarburton	Pennridge (Perkasie, PA)	LB	6.4	242	Penn State
271. James Foster	Lanier(Montgomery, AL)	QB	6-3	210	Texas A&M
272. Anthony Williams	Hahnville (Boutte, LA)	RB	5-9	175	Kansas
273. Corione Harris	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	CB	6-0	165	Kansas
274. Daniel George	Oxon Hill (Oxon Hill, MD)	WR	6-2	201	Penn State
275. Quincy Patterson	Solorio Academy (Chicago, IL)	QB	6-4	232	Virginia Tech
276. Christian Tutt	Thomson (Thomson, GA)	CB	5-11	193	Auburn
277. Micah Baskerville	Evangel Christian (Shreveport, LA)	LB	6-2	215	LSU
278. Trenell Troutman	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	S	5-10	188	Louisville
279. Jamal Elliott	Hillside (Durham, NC)	RB	5-10	180	Oregon
280. Taiyon Palmer	Archer (Lawerenceville, GA)	CB	6-0	178	NC State
281. Michael Harris	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	LB	6-2	213	Auburn
282. Thomas Booker	Gilman (Baltimore, MD)	DE	6-5	290	Stanford
283. George Takacs	Gulf Coast (Naples, FL)	TE	6-7	242	Notre Dame
284. Davin Cotton	Evangel Christian Academy (Shreveport, LA)	DT	6-1	262	LSU
285. Avery Jones	Havelock (Havelock, NC)	OG	6-4	275	UNC
286. Lawrence Keys III	McDonogh 35 (New Orleans, LA)	WR	5-11	160	Notre Dame
287. Elijah Wade	Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV)	DE	6-5	240	UCLA
288. Kyle Phillips	San Marcos (San Marcos, CA)	WR	5-11	176	UCLA
289. Cam'ron Jones	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	S	6-0	200	Nebraska
290. Camren McDonald	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	TE	6-4	220	Florida State
291. Casey Thompson	Newcastle (Newcastle, OK)	QB	6-1	184	Texas
292. Will Craig	Granite Bay (Granite Bay, CA)	OT	6-5	265	California
293. Matthew Bauer	Cathedral Prep (Erie, PA)	LB	6-3	222	Notre Dame
294. Kwatrivous Johnson	Greenwood (Greenwood, MS)	OT	6-8	338	Miss. State
295. Daniel Faalele	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OT	6-8	400	Minnesota
296. Devin O'Rourke	Lincoln-Way East (Frankfort, IL)	DE	6-6	240	Northwestern
297. David Reese	Vero Beach (Fort Pierce, FL)	LB	6-3	213	Florida
298. Fabian Franklin	Hattiesburg (Hattiesburg, MS)	RB	5-11	207	TCU
299. Leonard Taylor	Springfield (Springfield, OH)	TE	6-6	246	Cincinnati
300. Reese Moore	Seminole (Seminole, TX)	OT	6-6	280	Texas





JT Daniels

Quarterbacks

1.	Trevor Lawrence	Cartersville (Cartersville, GA)	6-6	208	Clemson
2.	Justin Fields	Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)	6-3	221	Georgia
3.	JT Daniels	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	6-2	205	USC
4.	Dorian Thompson-Robinson	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	6-2	195	UCLA
5.	Justin Rogers	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	6-4	210	TCU
6.	Tanner McKee	Centennial (Corona, CA)	6-6	220	Stanford
7.	Matt Corral	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	6-2	202	Ole Miss
8.	Jarren Williams	Central Gwinnett (Lawrenceville, GA)	6-2	206	Miami (Fla.)
9.	Phil Jurkovec	Pine-Richland (Gibsonia, PA)	6-5	215	Notre Dame
10.	Emory Jones	Heard County (Franklin, GA)	6-3	195	Florida
11.	Colson Yankoff	Coeur d'Alene (Coeur d'Alene, ID)	6-4	204	Washington
12.	Jacob Sirmon	Bothell (Bothell, WA)	6-4	227	Washington
13.	Adrian Martinez	Clovis West (Fresno, CA)	6-2	205	Nebraska
14.	Tyler Shough	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	6.5	187	Oregon
15.	Jack Tuttle	Mission Hills (San Marcos, CA)	6-4	195	Utah
16.	Spencer Sanders	Ryan (Denton, TX)	6-2	190	Oklahoma State
17.	Joe Milton	Olympia (Orlando, FL)	6-6	230	Michigan
18.	Dakereon Joyner	Fort Dorchester (North Charleston, SC)	6-2	206	South Carolina
19.	Gerry Bohanon	Earle (Earle, AR)	6-3	218	Baylor
20.	Jack West	Saraland (Saraland, AL)	6-4	217	Stanford
21.	Cameron Rising	Newbury Park (Newbury, CA)	6-2	209	Texas
22.	Tanner Mordecai	Midway (Waco, TX)	6-3	213	Oklahoma
23.	James Foster	Lanier(Montgomery, AL)	6-3	210	Texas A&M
24.	Quincy Patterson	Solorio Academy (Chicago, IL)	6-4	232	Virginia Tech
25.	Casey Thompson	Newcastle (Newcastle, OK)	6-1	184	Texas
26.	Matthew Baldwin	Lake Travis (Austin, TX)	6-3	195	Ohio State
27.	Jace Ruder	Norton (Norton, KS)	6-3	205	North Carolina
28.	Brevin White	Paraclete (Lancaster, CA)	6-2	185	Princeton
29.	Connor Noland	Greenwood (Greenwood, AR)	6-3	205	Arkansas
30.	Jalen Mayden	Sachse (Sachse, TX)	6-2	215	Mississippi State
31.	Cammon Cooper	Lehi (Lehi, UT)	6-4	202	Washington State
32.	Devin Leary	Timber Creek (Sicklerville, NJ)	6-2	189	NC State
33.	Theo Day	Divine Child (Dearborn, MI)	6-5	197	Michigan State
34.	Artur Sitkowski	IMG Academy (Old Bridge, NJ)	6-5	215	Rutgers
35.	Spencer Petras	Marin Catholic (Greenbrae, CA)	6-5	207	Iowa
36.	Allan Walters	The Peddle School (Highstown, NJ)	6-1	200	Vanderbilt
37.	Holton Ahlers	DH Conley (Greenville, NC)	6-4	235	East Carolina
38.	Michael Penix	Tampa Bay Tech (Tampa, FL)	6-2	195	Indiana
39.	Jack Plummer	Gilbert (Gilbert, AZ)	6-5	212	Purdue
40.	Gunnar Holmberg	Heritage (Wake Forest, NC)	6-3	180	Duke
41.	Kevin Doyle	St. John's College HS (Washington, DC)	6-4	210	Arizona
42.	Jamarye Joiner	Cienega (Tucson, AZ)	6-3	205	Arizona
43.	Woodrow Lowe III	Central (Bolivar, TN)	6-3	185	West Virginia
44.	Carter Bradley	Providence (Jacksonville, FL)	6-3	208	Toledo
45.	Brennan Armstrong	Shelby (Shelby, OH)	6-2	210	Virginia
46.	JT Shrout	William S. Hart Senior (Newhall, CA)	6-3	190	Tennessee
47.	Kaleb Eleby	Pattonville Sr. (Maryland Heights, MO)	6-2	205	Western Michigan
48.	Will Levis	Xavier (Middletown, CT)	6-4	222	Penn State
49.	Tyler DeSue	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	6-1	185	Maryland
50.	Cade Fortin	North Gwinnett (Suwanee, GA)	6-2	207	North Carolina

Running Backs

1.	Zamir White	Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)	6-1	220	Georgia
2.	Lorenzo Lingard	University (Orange City, FL)	6-0	190	Miami (Fla.)
3.	Ricky Slade	C.D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA)	5-9	185	Penn State
4.	Jaelen Gill	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	6-1	182	Ohio State
5.	James Cook	Northwestern (Miami, FL)	6-0	181	Georgia
6.	Brian Snead	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	5-11	200	Ohio State
7.	T.J. Pledger	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	5-8	190	Oklahoma
8.	Ricky Person	Heritage (Wake Forest, NC)	6-2	202	NC State
9.	Harold Joiner	Mountain Brook (Birmingham, AL)	6-3	218	Auburn
10.	Keaontay Ingram	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	6-1	190	Texas
11.	Camron Davis	Miami Carol City (Opa Locka, FL)	5-10	190	Miami (Fla.)
12.	Dameon Pierce	Bainbridge (Bainbridge, GA)	5-11	205	Florida
13.	Asa Martin	Austin (Decatur, AL)	6-0	200	Auburn
14.	Maurice Washington	Trinity Christian School (Cedar Hill, TX)	6-1	190	Nebraska
15.	Mychale Salahuddin	Woodson H.D. (Washington, DC)	5-10	193	Pitt
16.	Master Teague	Blackman (Murfreesboro, TN)	5-11	210	Ohio State
17.	Trey Lowe	Jesuit (Portland, OR)	5-7	174	Washington
18.	Lyn-J Dixon	Taylor County (Butler, GA)	5-11	178	Clemson
19.	Jashaun Corbin	Rockledge (Rockledge, FL)	6-0	191	Texas A&M
20.	Anthony Williams	Hahnville (Boutte, LA)	5-9	175	Kansas
21.	Jamal Elliott	Hillside (Durham, NC)	5-10	180	Oregon
22.	Fabian Franklin	Hattiesburg (Hattiesburg, MS)	5-11	207	TCU
23.	Markese Stepp	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	6-0	228	USC
24.	Shaun Shivers	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	5-7	174	Auburn
25.	Craig Williams	Crosby (Crosby, TX)	5-9	170	Baylor
26.	Chris Curry	Lehigh Senior (Lehigh Acres, FL)	5-11	200	LSU
27.	Jerome Ford	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	5-11	195	Alabama
28.	Jeremy Banks	Cordova (Cordova, TN)	6-2	215	Tennessee
29.	Kazmeir Allen	Tulare Union (Tulare, CA)	5-10	185	UCLA
30.	Anthony Grant	Buford (Buford, GA)	5-11	200	Florida State
31.	Tavion Thomas	Dunbar (Dayton, OH)	6-2	225	Cincinnati
32.	Ronnie Walker	Hopewell (Hopewell, VA)	5-10	190	Indiana
33.	Devon Lawrence	Wake Forest (Wake Forest, NC)	5-11	195	North Carolina
34.	Nakia Watson	Westlake (Austin, TX)	5-11	212	Wisconsin
35.	Slade Bolden	West Monroe (West Monroe, LA)	5-11	198	Alabama
36.	Christian Turner	Buford (Buford, GA)	5-11	187	Michigan
37.	Chris Brown	El Camino (Oceanside, CA)	6-1	218	California
38.	Richard Newton	Palmdale (Palmdale, CA)	6-1	183	Washington
39.	Deshaun Fenwick	Braden River (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	208	South Carolina
40.	Johnny Adams	Ben Davis (Indianapolis, IN)	5-11	196	California
41.	Max Borghi	Pomona (Arvada, CO)	5-10	195	Wash. State
42.	Malone Mataele	Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA)	5-11	170	Utah
43.	Lavonte Valentine	Melbourne Central Catholic (Melbourne, FL)	6-0	188	South Carolina
44.	Jahmir Smith	Lee County (Sanford, NC)	6-0	205	Notre Dame
45.	Charles Strong	Union County (Lake Butler, FL)	6-1	220	Texas A&M
46.	Nolan Edmonds	Alpharetta (Atlanta, GA)	5-11	206	Minnesota
47.	Brock Sturges	Allen (Allen, TX)	5-10	200	Arizona State
48.	Isaih Pacheco	Vineland South (Vineland, NJ)	5-11	190	Rutgers
49.	Tyrone Tracy	Decatur Central (Indianapolis, IN)	6-0	185	Iowa
50.	Andrew VanBuren	Chaminade (West Hills, CA)	6-1	217	Boise State



Lorenzo Lingard

AP

Tight Ends

1. Brevin Jordan	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	6-3	250	Miami (Fla.)
2. Jeremy Ruckert	Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY)	6-6	238	Ohio State
3. Luke Ford	Carterville (Carterville, IL)	6-6	248	Georgia
4. Zack Kuntz	Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA)	6-7	221	Penn State
5. Kyle Pitts	Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA)	6-6	235	Florida
6. Mustapha Muhammad	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	6-4	235	Michigan
7. Cameron Jurgens	Beatrice (Beatrice, NE)	6-3	240	Nebraska
8. Will Mallory	Providence (Jacksonville, FL)	6-5	207	Miami (Fla.)
9. Pat Freiermuth	Brooks School (North Andover, MA)	6-5	250	Penn State
10. Malcolm Epps	Dekaney (Houston, TX)	6-6	218	Texas
11. Spencer Webb	Christian Brothers (Sacramento, CA)	6-5	235	Oregon
12. Trenton Gillison	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, Ohio)	6-5	220	Michigan State
13. Michael Ezeike	Colony (Ontario, CA)	6-5	220	UCLA
14. George Takacs	Gulf Coast (Naples, FL)	6-7	242	Notre Dame
15. Camren McDonald	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	6-4	220	Florida State
16. Leonard Taylor	Springfield (Springfield, OH)	6-6	246	Cincinnati
17. John FitzPatrick	Marist School (Atlanta, GA)	6-6	230	Georgia
18. McCallan Castles	South Tahoe (South Lake Tahoe, CA)	6-5	230	California
19. Josh Whyle	LaSalle (Cincinnati, OH)	6-6	215	Cincinnati
20. Tyneil Hopper	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	6-3	225	Boise State

Wide Receivers

1. Justin Shorter	South Brunswick (Momnouth Junction, NJ)	6-4	213	Penn State
2. Amon-Ra St. Brown	Mater Del (Anaheim, CA)	6-0	191	USC
3. Terrace Marshall	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	6-3	192	LSU
4. Derion Kendrick	South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC)	6-1	184	Clemson
5. Jaylen Waddle	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	5-10	175	Alabama
6. Devon Williams	Antelope Valley (Lancaster, CA)	6-4	200	USC
7. Justyn Ross	Central (Phenix City, AL)	6-4	201	Clemson
8. Jordyn Adams	Green Hope (Cary,NC)	6-2	175	UNC
9. Marquis Spiker	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	6-3	180	Washington
10. Brennan Eagles	Alief Taylor (Houston, TX)	6-4	214	Texas
11. Mark Pope	Miami Southridge (Hialeah, FL)	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
12. Jacob Copeland	Escambia (Pensacola, FL)	6-0	192	Florida
13. Kamryn Babb	Christian Brothers (St. Louis, MO)	6-1	191	Ohio State
14. Kevin Austin	North Broward Prep (Pompano Beach, FL)	6-3	198	Notre Dame
15. Ja'Marr Chase	Archbishop Rummel (Metairie, LA)	6-1	195	LSU
16. Justin Watkins	East Ridge (Clermont, FL)	5-11	172	Florida
17. Matthew Hill	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	6-2	185	Auburn
18. Jalen Preston	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	6-2	212	Texas A&M
19. Joshua Moore	Yoakum (Yoakum, TX)	6-1	170	Texas
20. Al'Vonte Woodard	Lamar (Houston, TX)	6-1	193	Texas
21. Alontae Taylor	Coffee County Central (Manchester, TN)	6-0	184	Tennessee
22. Jalen Hall	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	6-4	192	Oregon
23. Kearis Jackson	Peach County (Fort Valley, GA)	6-0	203	Georgia
24. Xavier Williams	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	6-1	190	Alabama
25. Josh Vann	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	5-11	175	South Carolina
26. CJ Moore	Union (Tulsa, OK)	6-5	175	Okla. State
27. Brian Hightower	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	202	Miami (Fla.)
28. Warren Thompson	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	6-3	200	Florida State
29. Chase Cota	South Medford (Medford, OR)	6.4	195	UCLA
30. Anthony Schwartz	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-0	172	Auburn
31. Malik Heath	Callaway (Jackson, MS)	6-3	205	Miss. State
32. Devonta Jason	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	6-3	211	Miss. State
33. Isaah Crocker	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	6-1	175	Oregon
34. Tre Turner	Northwest Guilford (Greensboro, NC)	6-4	185	Virginia Tech
35. Seth Williams	Paul W Bryant (Cottondale, AL)	6-3	212	Auburn
36. Jahan Dotson	Nazareth (Nazareth, PA)	5-11	165	Penn State
37. Tommy Bush	Samuel Clemens (Schertz, TX)	6-5	191	Georgia
38. Elijah Moore	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	5-11	181	Ole Miss
39. Austin Osborne	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	6-2	188	Washington
40. Solomon Enis	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	6-4	190	Utah
41. Rondale Moore	Trinity (Louisville, KY)	5-9	174	Purdue
42. Michael Wilson	Chaminade (West Hills, CA)	6-2	180	Stanford
43. Camron Johnson	Brentwood Academy (Brentwood, TN)	6-1	182	Vanderbilt
44. Joseph Scates	Dunbar (Dayton, OH)	6-3	180	Iowa State
45. Tevailance Hunt	Texas High (Texarkana, TX)	6-2	185	TCU
46. Daniel George	Oxon Hill (Oxon Hill, MD)	6-2	201	Penn State
47. Lawrence Keys III	McDonogh 35 (New Orleans, LA)	5-11	160	Notre Dame
48. Kyle Phillips	San Marcos (San Marcos, CA)	5-11	176	UCLA
49. Erik Ezukanma	Timber Creek (Keller, TX)	6-2	183	Texas Tech
50. Joshua Fleeks	Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX)	6-0	170	Baylor

Offensive Linemen

1. Nicholas Petit-Frere	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	6-6	272	Ohio State
2. Jamaree Salyer	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	6-4	342	Georgia
3. Jackson Carman	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	6-6	330	Clemson
4. Cade Mays	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	6-6	318	Georgia
5. Brey Walker	Westmoore (Moore, OK)	6-7	320	Oklahoma
6. William Barnes	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	6-4	325	UNC
7. Penei Sewell	Desert Hills (Saint George, Utah)	6-5	349	Oregon
8. Trey Hill	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	6-4	346	Georgia
9. Rasheed Walker	North Point (Waldorf, MD)	6-6	290	Penn State
10. Matthew Jones	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	6-4	300	Ohio State
11. Richard Gouraige	Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)	6-5	271	Florida
12. Justin Dedich	Chaparral (Temecula, CA)	6-2	290	USC
13. Emil Ekiyor	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	6-2	322	Alabama
14. Nana Asiedu	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	6-5	265	Penn State
15. Max Wray	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	6-7	289	Ohio State
16. Junior Angilau	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-6	297	Texas
17. Tommy Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	6-7	313	Alabama
18. Jaelyn Duncan	St. Frances Academy (Owings, MD)	6-6	300	Maryland
19. Dylan Wonnum	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	6-5	323	South Carolina
20. Delone Scaife	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	6-3	320	Miami (Fla.)
21. Colten Blanton	Cy Ranch (Cypress, TX)	6-7	285	Texas A&M
22. Marquan McCall	Oak Park (Oak Park, MI)	6-4	320	Kentucky
23. Sam Taimani	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-2	320	Washington
24. Curtis Dunlap	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-4	368	Minnesota
25. Chris Murray	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	6-3	300	UCLA
26. Frederick Scruggs	Cathedral Prep (Erie, PA)	6-3	270	Penn State
27. Steven Jones	Chaparral (Temecula, CA)	6-5	340	Oregon
28. Dawson Jaramillo	Lake Oswego Senior (Lake Oswego, OR)	6-5	295	Oregon
29. Tank Jenkins	Park Crossing (Montgomery, AL)	6-3	325	Texas A&M
30. Cleveland Reed	Fort Meade (Fort Meade, FL)	6-3	327	Miami (Fla.)
31. Warren Ericson	North Gwinnett (Duluth, GA)	6-4	290	Georgia
32. Darrell Simpson	Northwest (Justin, TX)	6-7	336	Oklahoma
33. Jalen Mayfield	Catholic Central (Grand Rapids, MI)	6-5	273	Michigan
34. Avery Jones	Havelock (Havelock, NC)	6-4	275	UNC
35. Will Craig	Granite Bay (Granite Bay, CA)	6-5	265	California
36. Kwatrivous Johnson	Greenwood (Greenwood, MS)	6-8	338	Miss. State
37. Daniel Faalele	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-8	400	Minnesota
38. Reese Moore	Seminole (Seminole, TX)	6-6	280	Texas
39. Christian Meadows	Macon County (Montezuma, GA)	6-3	330	Florida State
40. Rafiti Ghirmai	Wakeland (Frisco, TX)	6-4	290	Texas
41. Darian Kinnard	St. Ignatius (Cleveland, OH)	6-7	336	Kentucky
42. Ryan Hayes	Traverse City West (Traverse City, MI)	6-7	252	Michigan
43. Verdis Brown	IMG Academy (Chicago, IL)	6-3	294	Illinois
44. Tyrone Sampson Jr.	East English Village Prep (Detroit, MI)	6-3	295	Fresno State
45. Jovaughn Gwyn	Harding University (Charlotte, NC)	6-2	291	South Carolina
46. Connor Galvin	Katy (Katy, TX)	6-6	260	Baylor
47. Finn Dirstine	Lawrence Academy (Acton, MA)	6-5	320	Boston College
48. Luke Matthews	Elkins (Missouri City, TX)	6-4	305	Texas A&M
49. Jarrett Patterson	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	6-5	285	Notre Dame
50. Jerome Carvin	Cordova (Cordova, TN)	6-4	330	Tennessee

Defensive Linemen

1. Xavier Thomas	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-3	260	Clemson
2. Eyabi Anoma	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	6-5	235	Alabama
3. Micah Parsons	Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA)	6-3	235	Penn State
4. KJ Henry	West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC)	6-6	235	Clemson
5. Taron Vincent	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-2	285	Ohio State
6. Brenton Cox	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	6-5	247	Georgia
7. Tyreke Smith	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	6-3	204	Ohio State
8. Nesta Silvera	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-2	308	Miami (Fla.)
9. Tommy Togiai	Highland (Pocatello, ID)	6-3	290	Ohio State
10. Ronnie Perkins	Lutheran North (St. Louis, MO)	6-3	256	Oklahoma
11. Michael Thompson	Parkway North (St. Louis, MO)	6-4	291	Oklahoma
12. Stephon Wynn	IMG Academy (Anderson, SC)	6-4	308	Alabama
13. Jayson Oweh	Blair Academy (Blairstown, NJ)	6-5	236	Penn State
14. PJ Mustipher	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	6.5	290	Penn State
15. Tyler Friday	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	6-3	263	Ohio State
16. Ron Tatum	Putnam City (Oklahoma City, OK)	6.5	269	Oklahoma
17. Josh Belk	Lewisville (Richburg, SC)	6-3	309	Clemson
18. Tuli Letuligasenoa	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	6-1	338	Washington
19. Jordan Davis	Southwind (Memphis, TN)	6-5	238	Alabama
20. Aidan Hutchinson	Divine Child (Dearborn, MI)	6-6	260	Michigan
21. Robert Cooper	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	6-2	377	Florida State
22. Coynis Miller	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, Alabama)	6-2	300	Auburn
23. Keondre Coburn	Westfield (Houston, TX)	6-1	329	Texas
24. Dante Stills	Fairmont (Fairmont, WV)	6-4	265	West Virginia
25. Jayson Ademilola	St. Peters Prep (Jersey City, NJ)	6-3	290	Notre Dame
26. Cameron Latu	Olympus (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-5	236	Alabama
27. Jalen Redmond	Midwest City (Oklahoma City, OK)	6-4	233	Oklahoma
28. Greg Emerson	North Side (Jackson, TN)	6-3	280	Tennessee
29. Rick Sandidge	Concord (Concord, NC)	6-5	285	South Carolina
30. Justin Mascoll	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	6-4	237	Clemson
31. Azeez Ojulari	Marietta (Marietta, GA)	6-4	224	Georgia
32. Austin Fontaine	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	6-3	309	Maryland
33. Christian Barmore	Neumann Goretti (Philadelphia, PA)	6-5	290	Alabama
34. Bobby Brown	Lamar (Arlington, TX)	6-4	282	Texas A&M
35. Joseph Ossai	Oak Ridge (Conroe, TX)	6-4	220	Texas
36. Max Wright	Taylor (Katy, TX)	6-4	270	Texas A&M
37. Alim McNeill	Sanderson (Raleigh, NC)	6-2	272	NC State
38. Jarell Cherry	Carter (Dallas, TX)	6-3	224	LSU
39. Andrew Chatfield	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-2	221	Florida
40. Calvin Avery	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	6-2	310	Illinois
41. Malcolm Lamar	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	6-5	250	Florida State
42. Abdul-Malik McClain	J Serra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano, CA)	6-4	230	USC
43. Trevor Trout	Chaminade (St. Louis, MO)	6-3	315	USC
44. Chasen Hines	Marshall (Marshall, TX)	6-3	335	LSU
45. Jeremiah Martin	Cajon (San Bernardino, CA)	6-5	240	Texas A&M
46. Brant Lawless	Nashville Christian School (Nashville, TN)	6-3	285	Tennessee
47. Andres Fox	Mobile Christian School (Mobile, AL)	6-4	245	Stanford
48. Kingsley Enagbare	Hapeville Charter (Atlanta, GA)	6-4	257	South Carolina
49. Thomas Booker	Gilman (Baltimore, MD)	6-5	290	Stanford
50. Davin Cotton	Evangel Christian Academy (Shreveport, LA)	6-1	262	LSU
51. Elijah Wade	Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV)	6-5	240	UCLA
52. Devin O'Rourke	Lincoln-Way East (Frankfort, IL)	6-6	240	Northwestern
53. Dare Rosenthal	Ferriday (Ferriday, LA)	6-7	327	LSU
54. Kayode Oladele	Champagnat Catholic-Hialeah (Miami, FL)	6-4	235	Auburn
55. Malik Langham	Lee (Huntsville, AL)	6-6	269	Florida
56. Tahj Rice	Waggener Traditional (Louisville, KY)	6-2	320	Duke
57. Tate Wildeman	Legend (Parker, CO)	6-6	245	Nebraska
58. Dennis Briggs	Gateway (Kissimmee, FL)	6-4	252	Florida State
59. Tyler Manoa	St. Francis (Mountain View, CA)	6-5	260	UCLA
60. Caleb Tannor	Miller Grove (Lithonia, GA)	6-3	225	Nebraska
61. Jaden Crumedy	Oak Grove (Hattiesburg, MS)	6-5	240	Miss. State
62. Draco Bynum	Wilsonville (Wilsonville, OR)	6-4	258	Washington
63. John Waggoner	Dowling Catholic (West Des Moines, IA)	6-5	230	Iowa
64. Moro Ojomo	Katy (Katy, TX)	6-3	280	Texas
65. Judge Culpepper	Plant (Tampa, FL)	6-5	256	Penn State
66. Chris Collins	Benedictine (Richmond, VA)	6-5	212	North Carolina
67. Tyler Linderbaum	Solon (Solon, IA)	6-2	255	Iowa
68. Jordan Davis	Mallard Creek (Charlotte, NC)	6-6	330	Georgia
69. Jalen Cunningham	Saint Clair County (Odenville, AL)	6-6	345	Ole Miss
70. Fabien Lovett	Olive Branch (Olive Branch, MS)	6-3	285	Miss. State
71. Aeneas Hawkins	Archbishop Moeller (Cincinnati, OH)	6-3	265	Penn State
72. Malik Vann	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	6-3	270	Cincinnati
73. Jordan Kelley	Union (Tulsa, OK)	6-3	293	Oklahoma
74. James Williams	Callaway (Jackson, MS)	6-5	285	Ole Miss
75. Gregory Rousseau	Champagnat Catholic (Hialeah, FL)	6-6	222	Miami

Linebackers

1. Palaie Gaoteote	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	6-2	235	USC
2. Adam Anderson	Rome (Rome, GA)	6-4	214	Georgia
3. Quay Walker	Crisp County (Cordele, GA)	6-4	236	Georgia
4. Teradja Mitchell	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	6-2	232	Ohio State
5. JJ Peterson	Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)	6-3	231	Tennessee
6. Payton Wilson	Orange (Hillsborough, NC)	6-4	225	NC State
7. Solomon Tuliaupupu	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	6-2	220	USC
8. Otis Reese	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	6-4	206	Georgia
9. Shayne Simon	St. Peters Prep (Jersey City, NJ)	6-3	215	Notre Dame
10. Jack Lamb	Great Oak (Temecula, CA)	6-4	220	Notre Dame
11. Channing Tindall	Spring Valley (Columbia, SC)	6-2	213	Georgia
12. Cameron McGrone	Lawrence Central (Indianapolis, IN)	6-1	215	Michigan
13. Ayodele Adeoye	IMG Academy (St. Louis, MO)	6-0	231	Texas
14. Merlin Robertson	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	6-3	241	Arizona State
15. Brandon Kaho	Reno (Reno, NV)	6-1	218	Washington
16. Dax Hollifield	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	6-2	236	Virginia Tech
17. Raymond Scott	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	6-2	220	USC
18. Dallas Grant	St. John's Jesuit (Toledo, OH)	6-3	225	Ohio State
19. Adrian Jackson	Mullen (Denver, CO)	6-2	210	Oregon
20. Xavier Peters	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	6-4	225	Florida State
21. Zakoby McClain	Valdosta (Valdosta, GA)	6-0	205	Auburn
22. DaShaun White	Richland (North Richland Hills, TX)	6-1	222	Oklahoma
23. Mike Jones Jr.	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-0	228	Clemson
24. K'Vaughan Pope	Dinwiddie County (Dinwiddie, VA)	6-2	210	Ohio State
25. Javontae Jean-Baptiste	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	6-5	215	Ohio State
26. Nik Bonitto	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-3	204	Oklahoma
27. Jesse Luketa	Mercyhurst Preparatory School (Erie, PA)	6-3	238	Penn State
28. Amari Gainer	Lawton Chiles (Tallahassee, FL)	6-3	204	Florida State
29. Robert Hicks	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	6-0	237	Louisville
30. Alston Orji	Rockwall (Rockwall, TX)	6-2	230	Vanderbilt
31. Bo Calvert	Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA)	6.4	218	UCLA
32. Nick Tarburton	Pennridge (Perkasie, PA)	6.4	242	Penn State
33. Micah Baskerville	Evangel Christian (Shreveport, LA)	6-2	215	LSU
34. Michael Harris	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	6-2	213	Auburn
35. Matthew Bauer	Cathedral Prep (Erie, PA)	6-3	222	Notre Dame
36. David Reese	Vero Beach (Fort Pierce, FL)	6-3	213	Florida
37. Kana'i Mauga	Waianae (Waianae, HI)	6-2	215	USC
38. Christopher Oats	Winton Woods (Cincinnati, OH)	6-4	215	Kentucky
39. Jack Sanborn	Lake Zurich (Lake Zurich, IL)	6-2	210	Wisconsin
40. Bumper Pool	Lovejoy (Lucas, TX)	6-3	213	Arkansas
41. Rosendo Louis	Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL)	6-1	225	South Carolina
42. Damone Clark	Southern University Lab (Baton Rouge, LA)	6-3	218	LSU
43. Eli'jah Winston	Central Catholic (Portland, OR)	6-3	232	USC
44. Alan Tisdale	Page (Greensboro, NC)	6-3	208	Virginia Tech
45. Chad Bailey	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	6-0	238	Missouri
46. Tennessee Pututau	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-2	260	Utah
47. Salua Masina	Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT)	6-4	205	Vanderbilt
48. Jack Sirmon	Brentwood Academy (Brentwood, TN	6-2	224	Washington
49. Quin Williams	Morgan County (Madison, GA)	6-2	240	Ga. Southern
50. Byron Hobbs	Eastern Hills (Fort Worth, TX)	6-4	216	Texas



Patrick Surtain Jr.

Defensive Backs

1. Patrick Surtain Jr.	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-1	199	Alabama
2. Tyson Campbell	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-3	180	Georgia
3. Caden Sterns	Steele (Cibolo, TX)	6-1	192	Texas
4. Tyreke Johnson	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	6-1	191	Ohio State
5. BJ Foster	Angleton (Angleton, TX)	6-1	188	Texas
6. Olaijah Griffin	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	6-0	170	USC
7. Isaac Taylor-Stuart	Helix (San Diego, CA)	6-2	187	USC
8. Jaiden Woodbey	St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA)	6-2	204	Florida State
9. Brendan Radley-Hiles	IMG Academy (Brandenton, FL)	5-10	183	Oklahoma
10. Kelvin Joseph	Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)	6-2	191	LSU
11. Jalen Green	Heights (Houston, TX)	6-0	171	Texas
12. Anthony Lytton	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	5-10	173	Florida State
13. DeMarvion Overshown	Arp (Arp, TX)	6-4	200	Texas
14. Kyler McMichael	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	6-1	201	Clemson
15. Asante Samuel Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	5-10	166	Florida State
16. Anthony Cook	Lamar (Houston, TX)	6-0	168	Texas
17. Houston Griffith	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	6-1	192	Notre Dame
18. Josh Proctor	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	6-2	190	Ohio State
19. Leon O'Neal Jr.	Cy Springs (Cypress, TX)	6-1	190	Texas A&M
20. Al Blades Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	6-0	170	Miami (Fla.)
21. Derrik Allen	Lassiter (Marietta, GA)	6-2	211	Notre Dame
22. Jalyn Armour-Davis	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	6-1	180	Alabama
23. Josh Jobe	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	6-1	180	Alabama
24. D'Shawn Jamison	Lamar (Houston, TX)	5-10	174	Texas
25. Aashari Crosswell	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	6-1	185	Arizona State
26. Steve Stephens	Edison (Fresno, CA)	6-0	185	Oregon
27. Chase Williams	Eleanor Roosevelt (Corona, CA)	6-1	190	USC
28. Julius Irvin	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	6-1	177	Washington
29. Jevon Holland	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	6-1	182	Oregon
30. Myles Sims	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	6-3	173	Michigan
31. Nadab Joseph	Miami Norland HS (Miami, FL)	6-2	180	Georgia
32. Amari Burney	Calvary Christian (Clearwater, FL)	6-1	215	Florida
33. Gurvan Hall	Palm Beach Gardens (West Palm Beach, FL)	5-11	173	Miami (Fla.)
34. Kyler Gordon	Archbishop Murphy (Everett, WA)	5-11	177	Washington
35. Kalon Gervin	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	5-11	180	Michigan State
36. Atanza Vongor	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	6-1	200	TCU
37. Trey Dean	Dutchtown (Hampton, GA)	6-2	180	Florida
38. Kwantel Raines	Aliquippa (Aliquippa, PA)	6-3	200	West Virginia
39. Gilbert Frierson	Coral Gables Senior (Miami, FL)	6-1	185	Miami (Fla.)
40. Jaycee Horn	Alpharetta (Alpharetta, GA)	6-0	190	South Carolina
41. Sevyn Banks	Jones (Orlando, FL)	6-1	180	Ohio State
42. Jordan Moore	Yoakum (Yoakum, TX)	5-11	192	Texas A&M
43. Jairus Brents	Waggener Traditional (Louisville, KY)	5-10	178	Louisville
44. Isaiah Bolden	Wesley Chapel (Zephyrhills, FL)	6-2	175	Florida State
45. Divaad Wilson	Northwestern (Miami, FL)	6-0	180	Georgia
46. Stephan Blaylock	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	5-10	185	UCLA
47. Jamien Sherwood	Jensen Beach (Jensen Beach, FL)	6-2	195	Auburn
48. Corione Harris	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	6-0	165	Kansas
49. Christian Tutt	Thomson (Thomson, GA)	5-11	193	Auburn
50. Trenell Troutman	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	5-10	188	Louisville
51. Taiyon Palmer	Archer (Lawerenceville, GA)	6-0	178	NC State
52. Cam'ron Jones	Mansfield (Mansfield, TX)	6-0	200	Nebraska
53. Chris Smith	Hapeville Charter (Atlanta, GA)	5-11	169	Georgia
54. Chamarri Conner	Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL)	6-0	193	Virginia Tech
55. Jordan Miner	Wiregrass Ranch (Tampa, FL	6-1	183	Penn State
56. D.J. Ivey	South Dade (Homestead, FL)	6-1	171	Miami (Fla.)
57. Ken Montgomery Jr.	Hillsborough (Tampa, FL)	6-2	165	Maryland
58. Noah Boykin	Woodson H.D. (Washington, DC)	6-2	170	Notre Dame
59. Brendon Harris	Baylor School (Chattanooga, TN)	6-1	205	Vanderbilt
60. C.J. Smith	Oxbridge Academy (West Palm Beach, FL)	6-2	193	Nebraska
61. Dallas Craddieth	Hazelwood Central (Florissant, MO)	6-1	193	Iowa
62. Gemon Green	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	6-2	165	Michigan
63. Chandler Jones	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	5-10	173	Louisville
64. Jonathan Gipson	Mill Creek (Hoschton, GA)	6-2	182	South Carolina
65. Verone McKinley III	Hebron (Carrollton, TX)	5-10	170	Oregon
66. Marcus Johnson	Villa Park (Villa Park, CA)	5-10	175	Unsigned
67. John Huggins	Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)	6-0	200	Florida
68. Trent Gordon	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	5-11	180	Penn State
69. Kendall Williamson	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	6-1	185	Stanford
70. Myles Mason	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	6-2	205	Arkansas
71. Eddie Smith	Salmen (Slidell, LA)	6-0	180	Alabama
72. Julius Brents	Warren Central (Indianapolis, IN)	6-2	179	Iowa
73. Tre Douglas	Eagles Landing Christ. Acad. (McDonough, GA)	6-2	180	Vanderbilt
74. Miguel Edwards	Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL)	6-0	164	Oklahoma
75. Michael Dowell	St. Edward (Lakewood, OH)	6-0	195	Michigan State



Joey Gatewood

Athletes

1. Joey Gatewood	Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)	6-4	232	Auburn
2. Talanoa Hufanga	Crescent Valley (Corvallis, OR)	6-1	193	USC
3. Bryan Addison	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	6-5	180	UCLA
4. Mario Goodrich	Lee's Summit West (Lees Summit, MO)	6-2	180	Clemson
5. L'Christian Smith	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	6-6	205	Ohio State
6. Smoke Monday	Carver (Atlanta, FL)	6-3	185	Auburn
7. Tre'Shaun Harrison	Garfield (Seattle, WA)	6-2	190	Florida State
8. Dyami Brown	West Meckenburg (Charlotte, NC)	6-2	180	UNC
9. Jaquayln Crawford	Rockdale (Rockdale, TX)	5-10	161	Oklahoma
10. Braden Lenzy	Tigard (Portland, OR)	6-0	175	Notre Dame
11. BJ Hanspard	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	6-0	170	Baylor
12. Bryce Thompson	Dutch Fork (Irmo, SC)	6-0	180	South Carolina
13. Richard Jibunor	Athens Christian (Athens, GA)	6-3	206	Auburn
14. Xavier Henderson	Pickerington Central (Pickerington, OH)	6-0	189	Michigan State
15. Jaylon King	Ensworth (Nashville, TN)	6-1	180	Georgia Tech
16. Iverson Clement	Rancocas Valley (Mount Holly, NJ)	5-11	199	Florida
17. James Graham	Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald, GA)	6-1	180	Georgia Tech
18. De'Von Graves	Appomattox County (Appomattox, VA)	6-1	180	NC State
19. Marquez Ezzard	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	6-2	213	Miami (Fla.)
20. Atrilleon Williams	Archbishop Stepinac (Yonkers, NY)	6-2	190	Syracuse
21. Vernon Jackson	Boling (Boling, TX)	6-3	240	Texas A&M
22. Khalil Shakir	Vista Murrieta (Murrieta, CA)	6-1	175	Boise State
23. Marcus Riley	James Rickards (Tallahassee, FL)	5-10	165	Louisville
24. Kundurrius Taylor	Ridgeway (Memphis, TN)	6-3	200	Oklahoma
25. Marcus Murphy	West Point (West Point, MS)	6-1	190	Miss. State

Surtain: Getty Images; Gatewood: AP Images

Recruiting // By Conference

ACC

1.	Trevor Lawrence	Cartersville (Cartersville, GA)	QB	6-6	208	Clemson
2.	Xavier Thomas	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-3	260	Clemson
3.	KJ Henry	West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC)	DE	6-6	235	Clemson
4.	Jackson Carman	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	OT	6-6	330	Clemson
5.	Lorenzo Lingard	University (Orange City, FL)	RB	6-0	190	Miami (Fla.)
6.	Derion Kendrick	South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC)	WR	6-1	184	Clemson
7.	Brevin Jordan	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	TE	6-3	250	Miami (Fla.)
8.	Jaiden Woodbey	St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA)	S	6-2	204	Florida State
9.	Justyn Ross	Central (Phenix City, AL)	WR	6-4	201	Clemson
10.	Anthony Lytton	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	CB	5-10	173	Florida State
11.	William Barnes	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	OT	6-4	325	UNC
12.	Nesta Silvera	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DT	6-2	308	Miami (Fla.)
13.	Kyler McMichael	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	CB	6-1	201	Clemson
14.	Jordyn Adams	Green Hope (Cary,NC)	WR	6-2	175	UNC
15.	Asante Samuel Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	5-10	166	Florida State
16.	Mark Pope	Miami Southridge (Hialeah, FL)	WR	6-1	175	Miami (Fla.)
17.	Jarren Williams	Central Gwinnett (Lawrenceville, GA)	QB	6-2	206	Miami (Fla.)
18.	Payton Wilson	Orange (Hillsborough, NC)	LB	6-4	225	NC State
19.	Al Blades Jr.	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-0	170	Miami (Fla.)
20.	Josh Belk	Lewisville (Richburg, SC)	DT	6-3	309	Clemson
21.	Ricky Person	Heritage (Wake Forest, NC)	RB	6-2	202	NC State
22.	Mario Goodrich	Lee's Summit West (Lees Summit, MO)	ATH	6-2	180	Clemson
23.	Robert Cooper	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DT	6-2	377	Florida State
24.	Justin Mascoll	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	DE	6-4	237	Clemson
25.	Delone Scaife	Miami Southridge (Miami, FL)	OG	6-3	320	Miami (Fla.)
26.	Dax Hollifield	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	LB	6-2	236	Virginia Tech
27.	Brian Hightower	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	WR	6-3	202	Miami (Fla.)
28.	Warren Thompson	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	WR	6-3	200	Florida State
29.	Tre'Shaun Harrison	Garfield (Seattle, WA)	ATH	6-2	190	Florida State
30.	Camron Davis	Miami Carol City (Opa Locka, FL)	RB	5-10	190	Miami (Fla.)
31.	Xavier Peters	Lakota West (West Chester, OH)	LB	6-4	225	Florida State
32.	Tre Turner	Northwest Guilford (Greensboro, NC)	WR	6-4	185	Virginia Tech
33.	Dyami Brown	West Meckenburg (Charlotte, NC)	ATH	6-2	180	UNC
34.	Gurvan Hall	Palm Beach Gardens (West Palm Beach, FL)	S	5-11	173	Miami (Fla.)
35.	Alim McNeill	Sanderson (Raleigh, NC)	DT	6-2	272	NC State
36.	Gilbert Frierson	Coral Gables Senior (Miami, FL)	CB	6-1	185	Miami (Fla.)
37.	Mike Jones Jr.	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LB	6-0	228	Clemson
38.	Will Mallory	Providence (Jacksonville, FL)	TE	6-5	207	Miami (Fla.)
39.	Mychale Salahuddin	Woodson H.D. (Washington, DC)	RB	5-10	193	Pittsburgh
40.	Malcolm Lamar	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	DE	6-5	250	Florida State

Big 12

1.	Caden Sterns	Steele (Cibolo, TX)	S	6-1	192	Texas
2.	BJ Foster	Angleton (Angleton, TX)	S	6-1	188	Texas
3.	Brey Walker	Westmoore (Moore, OK)	OT	6-7	320	Oklahoma
4.	Brendan Radley-Hiles	IMG Academy (Brandenton, FL)	CB	5-10	183	Oklahoma
5.	Justin Rogers	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	QB	6-4	210	TCU
6.	Jalen Green	Heights (Houston, TX)	CB	6-0	171	Texas
7.	DeMarvion Overshown	Arp (Arp, TX)	S	6-4	200	Texas
8.	Brennan Eagles	Alief Taylor (Houston, TX)	WR	6-4	214	Texas
9.	Anthony Cook	Lamar (Houston, TX)	CB	6-0	168	Texas
10.	Ronnie Perkins	Lutheran North (St. Louis, MO)	DE	6-2.5	256	Oklahoma
11.	Michael Thompson	Parkway North (St. Louis, MO)	DT	6.4	291	Oklahoma
12.	Joshua Moore	Yoakum (Yoakum, TX)	WR	6-1	170	Texas
13.	T.J. Pledger	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	RB	5-8	190	Oklahoma
14.	Ron Tatum	Putnam City (Oklahoma City, OK)	DE	6.5	269	Oklahoma
15.	Al'Vonte Woodard	Lamar (Houston, TX)	WR	6-1	193	Texas
16.	D'Shawn Jamison	Lamar (Houston, TX)	CB	5-10	174	Texas
17.	Ayodele Adeoye	IMG Academy (St. Louis, MO)	LB	6-0	231	Texas
18.	Keondre Coburn	Westfield (Houston, TX)	DT	6-1	329	Texas
19.	Dante Stills	Fairmont (Fairmont, WV)	DE	6-4	265	West Virginia
20.	Junior Angilau	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	OT	6-6	297	Texas
21.	Jalen Redmond	Midwest City (Oklahoma City, OK)	DE	6-4	233	Oklahoma
22.	CJ Moore	Union (Tulsa, OK)	WR	6-5	175	Okla. State
23.	Keaontay Ingram	Carthage (Carthage, TX)	RB	6-1	190	Texas
24.	Spencer Sanders	Ryan (Denton, TX)	QB	6-2	190	Okla. State
25.	Jaquayln Crawford	Rockdale (Rockdale, TX)	ATH	5-10	161	Oklahoma
26.	Joseph Ossai	Oak Ridge (Conroe, TX)	DE	6-4	220	Texas
27.	Atanza Vongor	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	S	6-1	200	TCU
28.	Kwantel Raines	Aliquippa (Aliquippa, PA)	S	6-3	200	West Virginia
29.	DaShaun White	Richland (North Richland Hills, TX)	LB	6-1	222	Oklahoma
30.	Nik Bonitto	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	LB	6-3	204	Oklahoma
31.	Malcolm Epps	Dekaney (Houston, TX)	TE	6-6	218	Texas
32.	BJ Hanspard	DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)	ATH	6-0	170	Baylor
33.	Cameron Rising	Newbury Park (Newbury, CA)	QB	6-2	209	Texas
34.	Tanner Mordecai	Midway (Waco, TX)	QB	6-3	213	Oklahoma
35.	Darrell Simpson	Northwest (Justin, TX)	OT	6-7	336	Oklahoma
36.	Joseph Scates	Dunbar (Dayton, OH)	WR	6-3	180	Iowa State
37.	Tevailance Hunt	Texas High (Texarkana, TX)	WR	6-2	185	TCU
38.	Anthony Williams	Hahnville (Boutte, LA)	RB	5-9	175	Kansas
39.	Corione Harris	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	CB	6-0	165	Kansas
40.	Casey Thompson	Newcastle (Newcastle, OK)	QB	6-1	184	Texas

Big Ten

1.	Micah Parsons	Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA)	DE	6-3	235	Penn State
2.	Nicholas Petit-Frere	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-6	272	Ohio State
3.	Justin Shorter	South Brunswick (Momnouth Junction, NJ)	WR	6-4	213	Penn State
4.	Taron Vincent	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DT	6-2	285	Ohio State
5.	Tyreke Johnson	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	S	6-1	191	Ohio State
6.	Ricky Slade	C.D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA)	RB	5-9	185	Penn State
7.	Jaelen Gill	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	RB	6-1	182	Ohio State
8.	Tyreke Smith	Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH)	DE	6-3	204	Ohio State
9.	Jeremy Ruckert	Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY)	TE	6-6	238	Ohio State
10.	Teradja Mitchell	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	LB	6-2	232	Ohio State
11.	Tommy Togiai	Highland (Pocatello, ID)	DT	6-3	290	Ohio State
12.	Rasheed Walker	North Point (Waldorf, MD)	OT	6-6	290	Penn State
13.	Matthew Jones	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	OC	6-4	300	Ohio State
14.	Josh Proctor	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	S	6-2	190	Ohio State
15.	Kamryn Babb	Christian Brothers (St. Louis, MO)	WR	6-1	189	Ohio State
16.	Jayson Oweh	Blair Academy (Blairstown, NJ)	DE	6-5	236	Penn State
17.	PJ Mustipher	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	DT	6.5	290	Penn State
18.	Brian Snead	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	RB	5-11	200	Ohio State
19.	Tyler Friday	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	DT	6-3	263	Ohio State
20.	Aidan Hutchinson	Divine Child (Dearborn, MI)	DE	6-6	260	Michigan
21.	Nana Asiedu	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	OT	6-5	265	Penn State
22.	Cameron McGrone	Lawrence Central (Indianapolis, IN)	LB	6-1	215	Michigan
23.	Max Wray	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	OT	6-7	289	Ohio State
24.	L'Christian Smith	Wayne (Dayton, OH)	ATH	6-6	205	Ohio State
25.	Adrian Martinez	Clovis West (Fresno, CA)	QB	6-2	205	Nebraska
26.	Jaelyn Duncan	St. Frances Academy (Owings, MD)	OT	6-6	300	Maryland
27.	Zack Kuntz	Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA)	TE	6-7	221	Penn State
28.	Austin Fontaine	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	DT	6-3	309	Maryland
29.	Dallas Gant	St. John's Jesuit (Toledo, OH)	LB	6-3	225	Ohio State
30.	Mustapha Muhammad	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	TE	6-4	235	Michigan
31.	Myles Sims	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	CB	6-3	173	Michigan
32.	Kalon Gervin	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	CB	5-11	180	Michigan State
33.	Jahan Dotson	Nazareth (Nazareth, PA)	WR	5-11	165	Penn State
34.	Cameron Jurgens	Beatrice (Beatrice, NE)	TE	6-3	240	Nebraska
35.	Joe Milton	Olympia (Orlando, FL)	QB	6-6	230	Michigan
36.	Maurice Washington	Trinity Christian School (Cedar Hill, TX)	RB	6-1	190	Nebraska
37.	Calvin Avery	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	OT	6-2	310	Illinois
38.	K'Vaughan Pope	Dinwiddle County (Dinwiddle, VA)	LB	6-2	210	Ohio State
39.	Curtis Dunlap	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OG	6-4	368	Minnesota
40.	Javontae Jean-Baptiste	Bergen Catholic (Oradell, NJ)	LB	6-5	215	Ohio State

Pac-12

1.	Amon-Ra St. Brown	Mater Del (Anaheim, CA)	WR	6-0	191	USC
2.	Palaie Gaoteote	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	LB	6-2	235	USC
3.	JT Daniels	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	QB	6-2	205	USC
4.	Olaijah Griffin	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	CB	6-0	170	USC
5.	Isaac Taylor-Stuart	Helix (San Diego, CA)	CB	6-2	187	USC
6.	Dorian Thompson-Robinson	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	QB	6-2	195	UCLA
7.	Devon Williams	Antelope Valley (Lancaster, CA)	WR	6-4	200	USC
8.	Tanner McKee	Centennial (Corona, CA)	QB	6-6	220	Stanford
9.	Penei Sewell	Desert Hills (Saint George, Utah)	OG	6-5	349	Oregon
10.	Marquis Spiker	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	WR	6-3	180	Washington
11.	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	LB	6-2	220	USC
12.	Talanoa Hufanga	Crescent Valley (Corvallis, OR)	ATH	6-1	193	USC
13.	Colson Yankoff	Coeur d'Alene (Coeur d'Alene, ID)	QB	6-4	204	Washington
14.	Jacob Sirmon	Bothell (Bothell, WA)	QB	6-4	227	Washington
15.	Bryan Addison	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	ATH	6-5	180	UCLA
16.	Tuli Letuligasenoa	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	DT	6-1	338	Washington
17.	Justin Dedich	Chaparral (Temecula, CA)	OC	6-2	290	USC
18.	Jalen Hall	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	WR	6-4	192	Oregon
19.	Merlin Robertson	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	LB	6-3	241	Arizona State
20.	Brandon Kaho	Reno (Reno, NV)	LB	6-1	218	Washington
21.	Aashari Crosswell	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	S	6-1	185	Arizona State
22.	Steve Stephens	Edison (Fresno, CA)	S	6-0	185	Oregon
23.	Chase Williams	Eleanor Roosevelt (Corona, CA)	CB	6-1	190	USC
24.	Tyler Shough	Hamilton (Chandler, AZ)	QB	6.5	187	Oregon
25.	Raymond Scott	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	LB	6-2	220	USC
26.	Julius Irvin	Servite (Anaheim, CA)	S	6-1	177	Washington
27.	Chase Cota	South Medford (Medford, OR)	WR	6.4	195	UCLA
28.	Jevon Holland	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	S	6-1	182	Oregon
29.	Jack Tuttle	Mission Hills (San Marcos, CA)	QB	6-4	195	Utah
30.	Adrian Jackson	Mullen (Denver, CO)	LB	6-2	210	Oregon
31.	Isaah Crocker	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	WR	6-1	175	Oregon
32.	Kyler Gordon	Archbishop Murphy (Everett, WA)	CB	5-11	177	Washington
33.	Sam Taimani	East (Salt Lake City, UT)	OG	6-2	320	Washington
34.	Austin Osborne	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	WR	6-2	188	Washington
35.	Abdul-Malik McClain	J Serra Catholic (San Juan Capistrano, CA)	DE	6-4	230	USC
36.	Solomon Enis	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	WR	6-4	190	Utah
37.	Chris Murray	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	OG	6-3	300	UCLA
38.	Gerry Bohanon	Earle (Earle, AR)	QB	6-3	218	Baylor
39.	Jack West	Saraland (Saraland, AL)	QB	6-4	217	Stanford
40.	Trevor Trout	Chaminade (St. Louis, MO)	DT	6-3	315	USC

SEC

1.	Justin Fields	Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)	QB	6-3	221	Georgia
2.	Eyabi Anoma	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	DE	6-5	235	Alabama
3.	Patrick Surtain Jr.	American Heritage (For Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-1	199	Alabama
4.	Zamir White	Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)	RB	6-1	220	Georgia
5.	Jamaree Salyer	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	OG	6-4	342	Georgia
6.	Tyson Campbell	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	CB	6-3	180	Georgia
7.	Terrace Marshall	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	WR	6-3	192	LSU
8.	Adam Anderson	Rome (Rome, GA)	LB	6-4	214	Georgia
9.	Cade Mays	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	OT	6-6	318	Georgia
10.	Brenton Cox	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	DE	6-5	247	Georgia
11.	Quay Walker	Crisp County (Cordele, GA)	LB	6-4	236	Georgia
12.	Jaylen Waddle	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	WR	5-10	175	Alabama
13.	James Cook	Northwestern (Miami, FL)	RB	6-0	181	Georgia
14.	Kelvin Joseph	Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)	S	6-2	191	LSU
15.	JJ Peterson	Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)	LB	6-3	231	Tennessee
16.	Joey Gatewood	Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)	ATH	6-4	232	Auburn
17.	Luke Ford	Carterville (Carterville, IL)	TE	6-6	248	Georgia
18.	Trey Hill	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	OG	6-4	346	Georgia
19.	Matt Corral	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	QB	6-2	202	Ole Miss
20.	Jacob Copeland	Escambia (Pensacola, FL)	WR	6-0	192	Florida
21.	Stephon Wynn	IMG Academy (Anderson, SC)	DE	6-4	308	Alabama
22.	Leon O'Neal Jr.	Cy Springs (Cypress, TX)	S	6-1	190	Texas A&M
23.	Richard Gouraige	Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-5	271	Florida
24.	Ja'Marr Chase	Archbishop Rummel (Metairie, LA)	WR	6-1	195	LSU
25.	Emory Jones	Heard County (Franklin, GA)	QB	6-3	195	Florida
26.	Otis Reese	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	LB	6-4	206	Georgia
27.	Justin Watkins	East Ridge (Clermont, FL)	WR	5-11	172	Florida
28.	Matthew Hill	Brookwood (Snellville, GA)	WR	6-2	185	Auburn
29.	Jalen Preston	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	WR	6-2	212	Texas A&M
30.	Channing Tindall	Spring Valley (Columbia, SC)	LB	6-2	213	Georgia
31.	Jalyn Armour-Davis	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	CB	6-1	180	Alabama
32.	Jordan Davis	Southwind (Memphis, TN)	DE	6-5	238	Alabama
33.	Josh Jobe	Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT)	CB	6-1	180	Alabama
34.	Emil Ekiyor	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	OC	6-2	322	Alabama
35.	Coynis Miller	Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, Alabama)	DT	6-2	300	Auburn
36.	Alontae Taylor	Coffee County Central (Manchester, TN)	WR	6-0	184	Tennessee
37.	Kearis Jackson	Peach County (Fort Valley, GA)	WR	6-0	203	Georgia
38.	Cameron Latu	Olympus (Salt Lake City, UT)	DE	6-5	236	Alabama
39.	Tommy Brown	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	OG	6-7	313	Alabama
40.	Greg Emerson	North Side (Jackson, TN)	DT	6-3	280	Tennessee

AAC

1.	Leonard Taylor	Springfield (Springfield, OH)	TE	6-6	246	Cincinnati
2.	Tavion Thomas	Dunbar (Dayton, OH)	RB	6-2	225	Cincinnati
3.	Josh Whyle	LaSalle (Cincinnati, OH)	TE	6-6	215	Cincinnati
4.	Ke'Von Ahmad	Colleyville Heritage (Colleyville, TX)	WR	6-1	183	UCF
5.	Malik Vann	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	DE	6-3	270	Cincinnati
6.	Meechi Harris	Xenia (Xenia, OH)	WR	6-2	188	Cincinnati
7.	Eriq Gilyard	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	OLB	5-11	225	UCF
8.	Treveon Johnson	Brenham (Brenham, TX)	WR	6-1	179	SMU
9.	Holton Ahlers	DH Conley (Greenville, NC)	QB	6-4	235	East Carolina
10.	Jeffery Johnson	Brookhaven (Brookhaven, MS)	DT	6-3	312	Tulane

C-USA

1.	Maureese Wren	Horn (Mesquite, TX)	ATH	6-4	216	Louisiana Tech
2.	Deuntra Hyman	Meridian (Meridian, MS)	DE	6-3	230	Southern Miss
3.	Jaquaun Webb	Oxford (Oxford, MS)	WR	6-1	180	Marshall
4.	Arak McDuffie	Trinity (Louisville, KY)	DE	6-5	241	Marshall
5.	Kevaris Thomas	Lakeland (Lakeland, FL)	QB	6-3	230	WKU
6.	Isaiah Windmon	John Ehret (Marrero, LA)	S	6-2	190	Louisiana Tech
7.	CD Daniels	Homewood (Birmingham, AL)	CB	6-2	180	UA
8.	Jarek Campbell	Riverdale (Murfreesboro, TN)	ATH	5-11	195	MTSU
9.	Jamal Anderson	South Dade (Homestead, FL)	S	6-2	180	FIU
10.	Donovan Georges	Champagnat Chatholic (Hialeah, FL)	LB	6-0	237	FIU

MAC

1.	Antwan Reed	Muskegon (Muskegon, MI)	OT	6-6	326	WMU
2.	Jalynn Williams	St. Petersburg (Saint Petersburg, FL)	WR	5-10	188	Toledo
3.	Carter Bradley	Providence (Jacksonville, FL)	QB	6-3	208	Toledo
4.	Kaleb Eleby	Pattonville Sr. (Maryland Heights, MO)	QB	6-2	205	WMU
5.	Derrius Mullins	St. Francis De Sales (Columbus, OH)	DT	6-4	324	Toledo
6.	Jalin Cooper	Medina (Medina, NY)	WR	6-4	180	Toledo
7.	Charles Robinson	Waubonsie Valley (Aurora, IL)	TE	6-3	210	NIU
8.	Lavel Dumont	Wharton (Tampa, FL)	OT	6-4	270	Toledo
9.	Cameron Stage	Cardinal Gibbons (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	OG	6-4	295	Bowling Green
10.	Keonta Nixon	Lake Park (Roselle, IL)	WR	6-4	205	CMU

MW

1.	Tyrone Sampson Jr.	East English Village Prep (Detroit, MI)	C	6-3	295	Fresno State
2.	Khalil Shakir	Vista Murrieta (Murrieta, CA)	ATH	6-1	175	Boise State
3.	Nikko Hall	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	S	6-1	171	Colorado State
4.	Tyneil Hopper	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	TE	6-3	225	Boise State
5.	J.R. Justice	St. Augustine (San Diego, CA)	ATH	6-3	200	San Diego State
6.	Chris Mitchell	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	S	6-0	190	Boise State
7.	Stefan Cobbs	Fossil Ridge (Keller, TX)	WR	6-0	170	Boise State
8.	Kobe Smith	Junipero Serra (Gardena, CA)	WR	6-2	174	San Diego State
9.	Nic McTear	Heritage (Frisco, TX)	TE	6-4	220	San Diego State
10.	Josiah Bradley	Saguaro (Scottsdale, AZ)	S	6-1	190	Nevada

Sun Belt

1.	Quin Williams	Morgan County (Madison, GA)	OLB	6-2	240	Georgia So.
2.	Nathan Page	Joe T. Robinson (Little Rock, AR)	ATH	6-0	175	Arkansas State
3.	Timaje Porter	Theodore (Theodore, AL)	DT	6-2	344	Louisiana
4.	Brandon Cross	Jones (Orlando, FL)	CB	5-10	182	Georgia So.
5.	Justin Birdsong	Stephenson (Stone Mountain, GA)	CB	5-11	175	Georgia So.
6.	Demontrez Brown	Bob Jones (Madison, AL)	WR	6-3	200	Troy
7.	Jake Andrews	Stanhope Elmore (Millbrook, AL)	OT	6-3	286	Troy
8.	K.J. Robertson	Thompson (Alabaster, AL)	OLB	6-2	205	Troy
9.	Destin Coates	James Rickards (Tallahassee, FL)	RB	5-10	190	Georgia State
10.	Jax Gasaway	Star City (Star City, AR)	OT	6-7	265	Arkansas State

Top 50 Classes

1. Georgia
2. Ohio State
3. Texas
4. USC
5. Penn State
6. Clemson
7. Alabama
8. Miami
9. Oklahoma
10. Notre Dame
11. Florida State
12. Auburn
13. Washington
14. Florida
15. LSU
16. Oregon
17. Texas A&M
18. UCLA
19. South Carolina
20. Tennessee
21. Michigan
22. Nebraska
23. North Carolina
24. Virginia Tech
25. TCU
26. NC State
27. Mississippi State
28. Maryland
29. Louisville
30. Baylor
31. Ole Miss
32. Michigan State
33. Oklahoma State
34. Utah
35. West Virginia
36. Arizona State
37. Minnesota
38. Kentucky
39. Stanford
40. Vanderbilt
41. Iowa
42. Missouri
43. California
44. Wisconsin
45. Washington State
46. Pittsburgh
47. Cincinnati
48. Indiana
49. Arkansas
50. Purdue



Justin Fields, Georgia

AP

Team Rankings

AAC

1. Cincinnati
2. USF
3. Tulane
4. UCF
5. Houston
6. Temple
7. SMU
8. Memphis
9. East Carolina
10. Tulsa
11. Navy
12. Connecticut

ACC

1. Clemson
2. Miami
3. Florida State
4. North Carolina
5. Virginia Tech
6. NC State
7. Louisville
8. Pittsburgh
9. Syracuse
10. Georgia Tech
11. Wake Forest
12. Duke
13. Virginia
14. Boston College

Big 12

1. Texas
2. Oklahoma
3. TCU
4. Baylor
5. Oklahoma State
6. West Virginia
7. Iowa State
8. Kansas
9. Kansas State
10. Texas Tech

Big Ten

1. Ohio State
2. Penn State
3. Michigan
4. Nebraska
5. Maryland
6. Michigan State
7. Minnesota
8. Iowa
9. Wisconsin
10. Indiana
11. Purdue
12. Illinois
13. Rutgers
14. Northwestern

Conference USA

1. FIU
2. Marshall
3. Louisiana tech
4. FAU
5. WKU
6. Southern Miss
7. UTSA
8. North Texas
9. Middle Tennessee
10. UAB
11. Charlotte
12. Rice
13. ODU
14. UTEP

MAC

1. Toledo
2. Western Michigan
3. Bowling Green
4. Northern Illinois
5. Kent State
6. Eastern Michigan
7. Ball State
8. Akron
9. Central Michigan
10. Ohio
11. Miami
12. Buffalo

Mountain West

1. Boise State
2. San Diego State
3. Nevada
4. Colorado State
5. Fresno State
6. Hawaii
7. San Jose State
8. UNLV
9. Utah State
10. Air Force
11. Wyoming
12. New Mexico

Pac-12

1. USC
2. Washington
3. Oregon
4. UCLA
5. Utah
6. Arizona State
7. Stanford
8. California
9. Washington State
10. Colorado
11. Arizona
12. Oregon State

SEC

1. Georgia
2. Alabama
3. Auburn
4. Florida
5. LSU
6. Texas A&M
7. South Carolina
8. Tennessee
9. Mississippi State
10. Ole Miss
11. Kentucky
12. Vanderbilt
13. Missouri
14. Arkansas

Sun Belt

1. Georgia Southern
2. Arkansas State
3. Georgia State
4. Troy
5. Texas State
6. South Alabama
7. Appalachian State
8. Coastal Carolina
9. ULM
10. Louisiana

Top 100 Rising Seniors – 2019 // Recruiting



Jadon Haselwood

Kayvon Thibodeaux

1.	Kayvon Thibodeaux	Oaks Christian (Thousand Oaks, CA)	DE	6-5	235
2.	Jadon Haselwood	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	WR	6-3	187
3.	Zach Harrison	Olentangy Orange (Lewis Center, OH)	DE	6-6	240
4.	Ishmael Sopsher	Amite (Amite, LA)	DT	6-5	279
5.	Nolan Smith	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	DE	6-3	232
6.	Trey Sanders	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	RB	5-12	216
7.	Owen Pappoe	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	LB	6-0	211
8.	Bru McCoy	Nater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	ATH	6-3	215
9.	Devontae Dobbs	Belleville (Belleville, MI)	OT	6-4	270
10.	Dominick Blaylock	Walton (Marietta, GA)	WR	6-0	175
11.	Clay Webb	Oxford (Oxford, AL)	C	6-3	297
12.	Kenyon Green	Atascocita (Humble, TX)	OT	6-4	317
13.	Brian Williams	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	S	6-0	185
14.	Chris Hinton	Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA)	DE	6-4	265
15.	Frank Ladson	South Dade (Miami, FL)	WR	6-4	170
16.	Akeem Dent	Palm Beach Central (West Palm Beach, FL)	CB	5-11	176
17.	Henry To'oto'o	De La Salle (Concord, CA)	LB	6-2	210
18.	Quavaris Crouch	Harding University (Charlotte, NC)	RB	6-2	224
19.	Derek Stingley	Dunham School (Baton Rouge, LA)	CB	6-0	170
20.	Darnell Wright	Huntington (Huntington, WV)	OT	6-6	290
21.	Zacch Pickens	TL Hanna (Anderson, SC)	DE	6-5	273
22.	Kardell Thomas	Southern University Lab (Baton Rouge, LA)	OG	6-4	320
23.	Faatui Tuitele	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	DT	6-4	299
24.	Nakobe Dean	Horn Lake (Horn Lake, MS)	LB	6-0	215
25.	Pierce Quick	Hewitt-Trussville (Trussville, AL)	OT	6-5	285
26.	Jordan Whittington	Cuero (Cuero, TX)	WR	6-1	198
27.	Daxton Hill	Booker T. Washington (Tulsa, OK)	S	6-1	190
28.	Isaiah Williams	Trinity Catholic (St. Louis, MO)	ATH	5-10	160
29.	Chris Steele	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	CB	6-1	188
30.	Theo Wease	Allen (Allen, TX)	WR	6-3	194
31.	Noah Cain	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	RB	5-11	209
32.	Travon Walker	Upson-Lee (Thomaston, GA)	DT	6-4	255
33.	Spencer Rattler	Pinnacle (Phoenix, AZ)	QB	6-2	180
34.	Tyler Johnson	Oak Ridge (Conroe, TX)	OT	6-5	308
35.	Brandon Smith	Louisa County (Mineral, VA)	DE	6-5	215
36.	Savion Jackson	Clayton (Clayton, NC)	DE	6-2	245
37.	Lewis Cine	Trinity Christian School (Cedar Hill, TX)	S	6-2	180
38.	Evan Neal	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OG	6-8	391
39.	Deyavie Hammond	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	OG	6-4	320
40.	Wanya Morris	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	OT	6-5	268
41.	Mary-Antony Richards	Wellington (West Palm Beach, FL)	ATH	6-1	194
42.	De'Gabriel Floyd	Westlake (Westlake Village, CA)	LB	6-2	220
43.	Hudson Henry	Pulaski Academy (Little Rock, AR)	TE	6-5	225
44.	Logan Brown	East Kentwood (Grand Rapids, MI)	OT	6-6	285
45.	MyKael Wright	Valencia (Valencia, CA)	CB	5-11	180
46.	Andrew Booth	Archer (Lawrenceville, GA)	CB	6-0	183
47.	Treylon Burks	Warren (Warren, AR)	WR	6-3	180
48.	Devonta Lee	Amite (Amite, LA)	WR	6-2	212
49.	Josh Sanguinetti	University School (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	ATH	6-2	165
50.	Arjei Henderson	Fort Bend Travis (Richmond, TX)	WR	6-1	179
51.	Nathan Pickering	Seminary (Seminary, MS)	DE	6-5	270
52.	Mycah Pittman	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	WR	6-0	195
53.	Grant Gunnell	St. Pius X (Houston, TX)	QB	6-6	212
54.	Marquez Beason	Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX)	ATH	5-11	173
55.	Jonah Tauanu'u	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	OT	6-6	310
56.	Quinn Carroll	Edina Senior (Minneapolis, MN)	OT	6-6	290
57.	Doug Nester	Spring Valley (Huntington, WV)	OT	6-6	295
58.	Antonio Alfano	Rahway (Rahway, NJ)	DE	6-4	255
59.	Shane Lee	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	LB	6-1	240
60.	Austin Jones	Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA)	RB	5-11	190
61.	Marcus Washington	Trinity Catholic (St. Louis, MO)	WR	6-2	170
62.	DeMarcco Hellams	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	WR	6-2	215
63.	Harry Miller	Buford (Buford, GA)	OT	6-4	310
64.	Kyle Ford	Orange Lutheran (Orange, CA)	WR	6-2	200
65.	Sean Rhyan	San Juan Hills (San Juan Capistrano, CA)	OT	6-5	302
66.	Diwun Black	Forest (Forest, MS)	ATH	6-3	205
67.	Stephen Herron Jr.	Trinity (Louisville, KY)	DE	6-4	235
68.	Jeremiah Criddell	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	CB	6-1	185
69.	Jerrion Ealy	Jackson Prep (Flowood, MS)	RB	5-9	190
70.	Devyn Ford	North Stafford (Stafford, VA)	RB	6-0	185
71.	Julian Barnett	Belleville (Belleville, MI)	CB	6-1	186
72.	John Emery Jr.	Destrehan (Destrehan, LA)	RB	6-0	194
73.	Bo Nix	Pinson Valley (Pinson, AL)	QB	6-2	194
74.	David Bell	Warren Central (Indianapolis, IN)	WR	6-2	185
75.	Jaylen McCollough	Hillgrove (Powder Springs, GA)	S	6-1	190
76.	Jowon Briggs	Walnut Hills (Cincinnati, OH)	DT	6-2	275
77.	Khris Bogle	Cardinal Gibbons (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	DE	6-4	207
78.	Garrett Wilson	Lake Travis (Austin, TX)	WR	6-0	185
79.	King Mwikuta	Troup County (Language, GA)	LB	6-4	232
80.	Trezmen Marshall	Clinch County (Homerville, GA)	ATH	6-1	236
81.	Jaquaze Sorrells	Largo (Largo, FL)	DT	6-3	270
82.	Lance Wilhoite	Franklin Road Academy (Nashville, TN)	WR	6-3	180
83.	Mase Funa	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	LB	6-3	240
84.	Dylan Morris	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	QB	6-1	200
85.	Charles Moore	Louisville (Louisville, MS)	DE	6-4	268
86.	Trey Palmer	Kentwood (Kentwood, LA)	WR	6-1	170
87.	Jeremiah Payton	Duncan U. Fletcher (Neptune Beach, FL)	WR	6-1	186
88.	Christian Williams	Daphne (Daphne, AL)	CB	6-1	177
89.	Tyrique Stevenson	South Dade (Homestead, FL)	ATH	6-0	190
90.	Jalen Curry	St. Pius X (Houston, TX)	WR	6-3	195
91.	Maninoa Tufano	Punahou (Honolulu, HI)	LB	6-3	220
92.	Nolan Rumler	Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH)	OG	6-4	290
93.	Jayden Daniels	Cajon (San Bernardino, CA)	QB	6-3	170
94.	Jaren Handy	Perry Central (New Augusta, MS)	DE	6-5	260
95.	Jacob Bandes	Pittsburg (Antioch, CA)	DT	6-2	275
96.	Joe Ngata	Folsom (Folsom, CA)	ATH	6-3	210
97.	Erick Young	Fort Bend Bush (Richmond, TX)	CB	6-1	195
98.	Xavier Truss	Bishop Hendrickson (Warwick, RI)	OT	6-7	325
99.	Enokk Vimahi	Kahuku (Kahuka, HI)	OT	6-5	290
100.	Jashawn Sheffield	Frederica Academy (Saint Simons Island, GA)	WR	6-1	178

2018 FBS Schedules


Clemson


South Florida

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE (7-6, 4-4)
Chestnut Hill, MA
Sept. 1 Massachusetts
Sept. 8 Holy Cross
Sept. 13 at Wake Forest
Sept. 22 at Purdue
Sept. 29 Temple
Oct. 6 at NC State
Oct. 13 Louisville
Oct. 26 Miami
Nov. 3 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 10 Clemson
Nov. 17 at Florida State
Nov. 24 Syracuse

CLEMSON (12-2, 8-1)
Clemson, SC
Sept. 1 Furman
Sept. 8 at Texas A&M
Sept. 15 Georgia Southern
Sept. 22 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 29 Syracuse
Oct. 6 at Wake Forest
Oct. 20 NC State
Oct. 27 at Florida State
Nov. 3 Louisville
Nov. 10 at Boston College
Nov. 17 Duke
Nov. 24 South Carolina

DUKE (7-6, 3-5)
Durham, NC
Sept. 1 Army
Sept. 8 at Northwestern
Sept. 15 at Baylor
Sept. 22 NC Central
Sept. 29 Virginia Tech
Oct. 13 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 20 Virginia
Oct. 27 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 3 at Miami
Nov. 10 North Carolina
Nov. 17 at Clemson
Nov. 24 Wake Forest

FLORIDA STATE (7-6, 3-5)
Tallahassee, FL
Sept. 3 Virginia Tech
Sept. 8 Samford
Sept. 15 at Syracuse
Sept. 22 Northern Illinois
Sept. 29 at Louisville
Oct. 6 at Miami
Oct. 20 Wake Forest
Oct. 27 Clemson
Nov. 3 at NC State
Nov. 10 at Notre Dame
Nov. 17 Boston College
Nov. 24 Florida

GEORGIA TECH (5-6, 4-4)
Atlanta, GA
Sept. 1 Alcorn State
Sept. 8 at South Florida
Sept. 15 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 22 Clemson
Sept. 29 Bowling Green
Oct. 5 at Louisville
Oct. 13 Duke
Oct. 25 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 3 at North Carolina
Nov. 10 Miami
Nov. 17 Virginia
Nov. 24 at Georgia

LOUISVILLE (8-5, 4-4)
Louisville, KY
Sept. 1 vs. Alabama #
Sept. 8 Indiana State
Sept. 15 Western Kentucky
Sept. 22 at Virginia
Sept. 29 Florida State
Oct. 5 Georgia Tech
Oct. 13 at Boston College
Oct. 27 Wake Forest
Nov. 3 at Clemson
Nov. 9 at Syracuse
Nov. 17 NC State
Nov. 24 Kentucky
#Orlando, FL

MIAMI (10-3, 7-1)
Coral Gables, FL
Sept. 2 vs. LSU #
Sept. 8 Savannah State
Sept. 15 at Toledo
Sept. 22 FIU
Sept. 27 North Carolina
Oct. 6 Florida State
Oct. 13 at Virginia
Oct. 26 at Boston College
Nov. 3 Duke
Nov. 10 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 17 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 24 Pittsburgh
#Arlington, TX

NORTH CAROLINA (3-9, 1-7)
Chapel Hill, NC
Sept. 1 at California
Sept. 8 at East Carolina
Sept. 15 UCF
Sept. 22 Pittsburgh
Sept. 27 at Miami
Oct. 13 Virginia Tech
Oct. 20 at Syracuse
Oct. 27 at Virginia
Nov. 3 Georgia Tech
Nov. 10 at Duke
Nov. 17 Western Carolina
Nov. 24 NC State

NC STATE (9-4, 6-2)
Raleigh, NC
Sept. 1 James Madison
Sept. 8 Georgia State
Sept. 15 West Virginia
Sept. 22 at Marshall
Sept. 29 Virginia
Oct. 6 Boston College
Oct. 20 at Clemson
Oct. 27 at Syracuse
Nov. 3 Florida State
Nov. 8 Wake Forest
Nov. 17 at Louisville
Nov. 24 at North Carolina

PITTSBURGH (5-7, 3-5)
Pittsburgh, PA
Sept. 1 Albany
Sept. 8 Penn State
Sept. 15 Georgia Tech
Sept. 22 at North Carolina
Sept. 29 at UCF
Oct. 6 Syracuse
Oct. 13 at Notre Dame
Oct. 27 Duke
Nov. 2 at Virginia
Nov. 10 Virginia Tech
Nov. 17 at Wake Forest
Nov. 24 at Miami

SYRACUSE (4-8, 2-6)
Syracuse, NY
Sept. 1 at Western Michigan
Sept. 8 Wagner
Sept. 15 Florida State
Sept. 22 Connecticut
Sept. 29 at Clemson
Oct. 6 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 20 North Carolina
Oct. 27 NC State
Nov. 3 at Wake Forest
Nov. 9 Louisville
Nov. 17 vs. Notre Dame #
Nov. 24 at Boston College
#Bronx, NY

VIRGINIA (6-7, 3-5)
Charlottesville, VA
Sept. 1 Richmond
Sept. 8 at Indiana
Sept. 15 Ohio
Sept. 22 Louisville
Sept. 29 at NC State
Oct. 13 Miami
Oct. 20 at Duke
Oct. 27 North Carolina
Nov. 2 Pittsburgh
Nov. 10 Liberty
Nov. 17 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 23 at Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA TECH (9-4, 5-3)
Blacksburg, VA
Sept. 3 at Florida State
Sept. 8 William & Mary
Sept. 15 East Carolina
Sept. 22 at Old Dominion
Sept. 29 at Duke
Oct. 6 Notre Dame
Oct. 13 at North Carolina
Oct. 25 Georgia Tech
Nov. 3 Boston College
Nov. 10 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 17 Miami
Nov. 23 Virginia

WAKE FOREST (8-5, 4-4)
Winston-Salem, NC
Aug. 30 at Tulane
Sept. 8 Towson
Sept. 13 Boston College
Sept. 22 Notre Dame
Sept. 29 Rice
Oct. 6 Clemson
Oct. 20 at Florida State
Oct. 27 at Louisville
Nov. 3 Syracuse
Nov. 8 at NC State
Nov. 17 Pittsburgh
Nov. 24 at Duke

AMERICAN

CINCINNATI (4-8, 2-6)
Cincinnati, OH
Sept. 1 at UCLA
Sept. 8 Miami (Ohio) #
Sept. 15 Alabama A&M
Sept. 22 Ohio
Sept. 29 at Connecticut
Oct. 6 Tulane
Oct. 20 at Temple
Oct. 27 at SMU
Nov. 3 Navy
Nov. 10 South Florida
Nov. 17 at UCF
Nov. 23 East Carolina
#Paul Brown Stadium

CONNECTICUT (3-9, 2-6)
Storrs, CT
Aug. 30 UCF
Sept. 8 at Boise State
Sept. 15 Rhode Island
Sept. 22 at Syracuse
Sept. 29 Cincinnati
Oct. 6 at Memphis
Oct. 20 at South Florida
Oct. 27 Massachusetts
Nov. 3 at Tulsa
Nov. 10 SMU
Nov. 17 at East Carolina
Nov. 24 Temple

EAST CAROLINA (3-9, 2-6)
Greenville, NC
Sept. 1 North Carolina A&T
Sept. 8 North Carolina
Sept. 15 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 22 at South Florida
Sept. 29 Old Dominion
Oct. 6 at Temple
Oct. 13 Houston
Oct. 20 UCF
Nov. 3 Memphis
Nov. 10 at Tulane
Nov. 17 Connecticut
Nov. 23 at Cincinnati

HOUSTON (7-5, 5-3)
Houston, TX
Sept. 1 at Rice
Sept. 8 Arizona
Sept. 15 at Texas Tech
Sept. 22 Texas Southern
Oct. 4 Tulsa
Oct. 13 at East Carolina
Oct. 20 at Navy
Oct. 27 South Florida
Nov. 3 at SMU
Nov. 10 Temple
Nov. 15 Tulane
Nov. 23 at Memphis

MEMPHIS (10-3, 7-1)
Memphis, TN
Sept. 1 Mercer
Sept. 8 at Navy
Sept. 14 Georgia State
Sept. 22 South Alabama
Sept. 28 at Tulane
Oct. 6 Connecticut
Oct. 13 UCF
Oct. 20 at Missouri
Nov. 3 at East Carolina
Nov. 10 Tulsa
Nov. 16 at SMU
Nov. 23 Houston

NAVY (7-6, 4-4)
Annapolis, MD
Sept. 1 at Hawaii
Sept. 8 Memphis
Sept. 15 Lehigh
Sept. 22 at SMU
Oct. 6 at Air Force
Oct. 13 Temple
Oct. 20 Houston
Oct. 27 vs. Notre Dame #
Nov. 3 at Cincinnati
Nov. 10 at UCF
Nov. 17 Tulsa
Nov. 24 at Tulane
Dec. 8 vs. Army %
#San Diego, CA
%Philadelphia, PA

SOUTH FLORIDA (10-2, 6-2)
Tampa, FL
Sept. 1 Elon
Sept. 8 Georgia Tech
Sept. 15 vs. Illinois #
Sept. 22 East Carolina
Oct. 6 at Massachusetts
Oct. 12 at Tulsa
Oct. 20 Connecticut
Oct. 27 at Houston
Nov. 3 Tulane
Nov. 10 at Cincinnati
Nov. 17 at Temple
Nov. 23 UCF
#Chicago, IL

SMU (7-6, 4-4)
Dallas, TX
Sept. 1 at North Texas
Sept. 7 TCU
Sept. 15 at Michigan
Sept. 22 Navy
Sept. 29 Houston Baptist
Oct. 6 at UCF
Oct. 20 at Tulane
Oct. 27 Cincinnati
Nov. 3 Houston
Nov. 10 at Connecticut
Nov. 16 Memphis
Nov. 24 at Tulsa

Clemson: Paul Abell, Tulane; Parker Waters/Tulane Athletics; Penn State: Peter Brouillet; Michigan: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Ohio State: Tom Lynn; South Florida: USF Athletics


Tulane


Penn State


Michigan


Ohio State

TEMPLE (7-6, 4-4)
Philadelphia, PA
Sept. 1 Villanova
Sept. 8 Buffalo
Sept. 15 at Maryland
Sept. 20 Tulsa
Sept. 29 at Boston College
Oct. 6 East Carolina
Oct. 13 at Navy
Oct. 20 Cincinnati
Nov. 1 at UCF
Nov. 10 at Houston
Nov. 17 South Florida
Nov. 24 at Connecticut

TULANE (5-7, 3-5)
New Orleans, LA
Aug. 30 Wake Forest
Sept. 8 Nicholls
Sept. 15 at UAB
Sept. 22 at Ohio State
Sept. 28 Memphis
Oct. 6 at Cincinnati
Oct. 20 SMU
Oct. 27 at Tulsa
Nov. 3 at South Florida
Nov. 10 East Carolina
Nov. 15 at Houston
Nov. 24 Navy

TULSA (2-10, 1-7)
Tulsa, OK
Sept. 1 Central Arkansas
Sept. 8 at Texas
Sept. 15 Arkansas State
Sept. 20 at Temple
Oct. 4 at Houston
Oct. 12 South Florida
Oct. 20 at Arkansas
Oct. 27 Tulane
Nov. 3 Connecticut
Nov. 10 at Memphis
Nov. 17 at Navy
Nov. 24 SMU

UCF (13-0, 8-0)
Orlando, FL
Aug. 30 at Connecticut
Sept. 8 South Carolina State
Sept. 15 at North Carolina
Sept. 21 Florida Atlantic
Sept. 29 Pittsburgh
Oct. 6 SMU
Oct. 13 at Memphis
Oct. 20 at East Carolina
Nov. 1 Temple
Nov. 10 Navy
Nov. 17 Cincinnati
Nov. 23 at South Florida

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS (2-10, 0-9)
Champaign, IL
Sept. 1 Kent State
Sept. 8 Western Illinois
Sept. 15 vs. South Florida #
Sept. 21 Penn State
Oct. 6 at Rutgers
Oct. 13 Purdue
Oct. 20 at Wisconsin
Oct. 27 at Maryland
Nov. 3 Minnesota
Nov. 10 at Nebraska
Nov. 17 Iowa
Nov. 24 Northwestern
#Chicago, IL

INDIANA (5-7, 2-7)
Bloomington, IN
Sept. 1 at FIU
Sept. 8 Virginia
Sept. 15 Ball State
Sept. 22 Michigan State
Sept. 29 at Rutgers
Oct. 6 at Ohio State
Oct. 13 Iowa
Oct. 20 Penn State
Oct. 26 at Minnesota
Nov. 10 Maryland
Nov. 17 at Michigan
Nov. 24 Purdue

IOWA (8-5, 4-5)
Iowa City, IA
Sept. 1 Northern Illinois
Sept. 8 Iowa State
Sept. 15 Northern Iowa
Sept. 22 Wisconsin
Oct. 6 at Minnesota
Oct. 13 at Indiana
Oct. 20 Maryland
Oct. 27 at Penn State
Nov. 3 at Purdue
Nov. 10 Northwestern
Nov. 17 at Illinois
Nov. 23 Nebraska

MARYLAND (4-8, 2-7)
College Park, MD
Sept. 1 vs. Texas #
Sept. 8 at Bowling Green
Sept. 15 Temple
Sept. 22 Minnesota
Oct. 6 at Michigan
Oct. 13 Rutgers
Oct. 20 at Iowa
Oct. 27 Illinois
Nov. 3 Michigan State
Nov. 10 at Indiana
Nov. 17 Ohio State
Nov. 24 at Penn State
#Landover, MD

MICHIGAN (8-5, 5-4)
Ann Arbor, MI
Sept. 1 at Notre Dame
Sept. 8 Western Michigan
Sept. 15 SMU
Sept. 22 Nebraska
Sept. 29 at Northwestern
Oct. 6 Maryland
Oct. 13 Wisconsin
Oct. 20 at Michigan State
Nov. 3 Penn State
Nov. 10 at Rutgers
Nov. 17 Indiana
Nov. 24 at Ohio State

MICHIGAN STATE (10-3, 7-2)
East Lansing, MI
Aug. 31 Utah State
Sept. 8 at Arizona State
Sept. 22 at Indiana
Sept. 29 Central Michigan
Oct. 6 Northwestern
Oct. 13 at Penn State
Oct. 20 Michigan
Oct. 27 Purdue
Nov. 3 at Maryland
Nov. 10 Ohio State
Nov. 17 at Nebraska
Nov. 24 Rutgers

MINNESOTA (5-7, 2-7)
Minneapolis, MN
Aug. 30 New Mexico State
Sept. 8 Fresno State
Sept. 15 Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 22 at Maryland
Oct. 6 Iowa
Oct. 13 at Ohio State
Oct. 20 at Nebraska
Oct. 26 Indiana
Nov. 3 at Illinois
Nov. 10 Purdue
Nov. 17 Northwestern
Nov. 24 at Wisconsin

NEBRASKA (4-8, 3-6)
Lincoln, NE
Sept. 1 Akron
Sept. 8 Colorado
Sept. 15 Troy
Sept. 22 at Michigan
Sept. 29 Purdue
Oct. 6 at Wisconsin
Oct. 13 at Northwestern
Oct. 20 Minnesota
Nov. 3 at Ohio State
Nov. 10 Illinois
Nov. 17 Michigan State
Nov. 23 at Iowa

NORTHWESTERN (10-3, 7-2)
Evanston, IL
Aug. 30 at Purdue
Sept. 8 Duke
Sept. 15 Akron
Sept. 29 Michigan
Oct. 6 at Michigan State
Oct. 13 Nebraska
Oct. 20 at Rutgers
Oct. 27 Wisconsin
Nov. 3 Notre Dame
Nov. 10 at Iowa
Nov. 17 at Minnesota
Nov. 24 at Illinois

OHIO STATE (12-2, 8-1)
Columbus, OH
Sept. 1 Oregon State
Sept. 8 Rutgers
Sept. 15 vs. TCU #
Sept. 22 Tulane
Sept. 29 at Penn State
Oct. 6 Indiana
Oct. 13 Minnesota
Oct. 20 at Purdue
Nov. 3 Nebraska
Nov. 10 at Michigan State
Nov. 17 at Maryland
Nov. 24 Michigan
#Arlington, TX

PENN STATE (11-2, 6-2)
University Park, PA
Sept. 1 Appalachian State
Sept. 8 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 15 Kent State
Sept. 21 at Illinois
Sept. 29 Ohio State
Oct. 13 Michigan State
Oct. 20 at Indiana
Oct. 27 Iowa
Nov. 3 at Michigan
Nov. 10 Wisconsin
Nov. 17 at Rutgers
Nov. 24 Maryland

PURDUE (7-6, 4-5)
West Lafayette, IN
Aug. 30 Northwestern
Sept. 8 Eastern Michigan
Sept. 15 Missouri
Sept. 22 Boston College
Sept. 29 at Nebraska
Oct. 13 at Illinois
Oct. 20 Ohio State
Oct. 27 at Michigan State
Nov. 3 Iowa
Nov. 10 at Minnesota
Nov. 17 Wisconsin
Nov. 24 at Indiana

RUTGERS (4-8, 3-6)
New Brunswick, NJ
Sept. 1 Texas State
Sept. 8 at Ohio State
Sept. 15 at Kansas
Sept. 22 Buffalo
Sept. 29 Indiana
Oct. 6 Illinois
Oct. 13 at Maryland
Oct. 20 Northwestern
Nov. 3 at Wisconsin
Nov. 10 Michigan
Nov. 17 Penn State
Nov. 24 at Michigan State

WISCONSIN (13-1, 9-0)
Madison, WI
Aug. 31 Western Kentucky
Sept. 8 New Mexico
Sept. 15 BYU
Sept. 22 at Iowa
Oct. 6 Nebraska
Oct. 13 at Michigan
Oct. 20 Illinois
Oct. 27 at Northwestern
Nov. 3 Rutgers
Nov. 10 at Penn State
Nov. 17 at Purdue
Nov. 24 Minnesota

BIG 12

BAYLOR (1-11, 1-8)
Waco, TX
Sept. 1 Abilene Christian
Sept. 8 at UTSA
Sept. 15 Duke
Sept. 22 Kansas
Sept. 29 at Oklahoma
Oct. 6 Kansas State
Oct. 13 at Texas
Oct. 25 at West Virginia
Nov. 3 Oklahoma State
Nov. 10 at Iowa State
Nov. 17 TCU
Nov. 24 vs. Texas Tech #
#Arlington, TX

IOWA STATE (8-5, 5-4)
Ames, IA
Sept. 1 South Dakota State
Sept. 8 at Iowa
Sept. 15 Oklahoma
Sept. 22 Akron
Sept. 29 at TCU
Oct. 6 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 13 West Virginia
Oct. 27 Texas Tech
Nov. 3 at Kansas
Nov. 10 Baylor
Nov. 17 at Texas
Nov. 24 Kansas State

2018 FBS Schedules


Oklahoma

KANSAS (1-11, 0-9)
Lawrence, KS
Sept. 1 Nicholls State
Sept. 8 at Central Michigan
Sept. 15 Rutgers
Sept. 22 at Baylor
Sept. 29 Oklahoma State
Oct. 6 at West Virginia
Oct. 20 at Texas Tech
Oct. 27 TCU
Nov. 3 Iowa State
Nov. 10 at Kansas State
Nov. 17 at Oklahoma
Nov. 23 Texas

KANSAS STATE (8-5, 5-4)
Manhattan, KS
Sept. 1 South Dakota
Sept. 8 Mississippi State
Sept. 15 UTSA
Sept. 22 at West Virginia
Sept. 29 Texas
Oct. 6 at Baylor
Oct. 13 Oklahoma State
Oct. 27 at Oklahoma
Nov. 3 at TCU
Nov. 10 Kansas
Nov. 17 Texas Tech
Nov. 24 at Iowa State

OKLAHOMA (12-2, 8-1)
Norman, OK
Sept. 1 Florida Atlantic
Sept. 8 UCLA
Sept.15 at Iowa State
Sept.22 Army
Sept.29 Baylor
Oct. 6 vs. Texas #
Oct. 20 at TCU
Oct. 27 Kansas State
Nov. 3 at Texas Tech
Nov. 10 Oklahoma State
Nov. 17 Kansas
Nov. 23 at West Virginia
#Dallas, TX

OKLAHOMA STATE (9-4, 5-4)
Stillwater, OK
Sept. 1 Missouri State
Sept. 8 South Alabama
Sept.15 Boise State
Sept.22 Texas Tech
Sept.29 at Kansas
Oct. 6 Iowa State
Oct. 13 at Kansas State
Oct. 27 Texas
Nov. 3 at Baylor
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma
Nov. 17 West Virginia
Nov. 24 at TCU

TEXAS (7-6, 5-4)
Austin, TX
Sept. 1 vs. Maryland #
Sept. 8 Tulsa
Sept.15 USC
Sept.22 TCU
Sept.29 at Kansas State
Oct. 6 vs Oklahoma %
Oct. 13 Baylor
Oct. 27 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 3 West Virginia
Nov. 10 at Texas Tech
Nov. 17 Iowa State
Nov. 23 at Kansas
#Landover, MD %Dallas, TX

TCU (11-3, 7-2)
Fort Worth, TX
Sept. 1 Southern
Sept. 7 at SMU
Sept.15 vs. Ohio State #
Sept.22 at Texas
Sept.29 Iowa State
Oct. 11 Texas Tech
Oct. 20 Oklahoma
Oct. 27 at Kansas
Nov. 3 Kansas State
Nov. 10 at West Virginia
Nov. 17 at Baylor
Nov. 24 Oklahoma State
#Arlington, TX

TEXAS TECH (6-7, 3-6)
Lubbock, TX
Sept. 1 vs. Ole Miss #
Sept. 8 Lamar
Sept.15 Houston
Sept.22 at Oklahoma State
Sept.29 West Virginia
Oct. 11 at TCU
Oct. 20 Kansas
Oct. 27 at Iowa State
Nov. 3 Oklahoma
Nov. 10 Texas
Nov. 17 at Kansas State
Nov. 24 vs. Baylor%
#Houston, TX %Arlington, TX

WEST VIRGINIA (7-6, 5-4)
Morgantown, WV
Sept. 1 vs Tennessee #
Sept. 8 Youngstown State
Sept.15 at NC State
Sept.22 Kansas State
Sept.29 at Texas Tech
Oct. 6 Kansas
Oct. 13 at Iowa State
Oct. 25 Baylor
Nov. 3 at Texas
Nov. 10 TCU
Nov. 17 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 23 Oklahoma
#Charlotte, NC

C-USA

CHARLOTTE (1-11, 1-7)
Charlotte, NC
Sept. 1 Fordham
Sept. 8 Appalachian State
Sept.15 Old Dominion
Sept.22 at Massachusetts
Sept.29 at UAB
Oct. 13 Western Kentucky
Oct. 20 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 27 Southern Miss
Nov. 3 at Tennessee
Nov. 10 at Marshall
Nov. 17 FIU
Nov. 24 at Florida Atlantic

FIU (8-5, 5-3)
Miami, FL
Sept. 1 Indiana
Sept. 8 at Old Dominion
Sept.15 Massachusetts
Sept.22 at Miami
Sept.29 Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Oct. 13 Middle Tennessee
Oct. 20 Rice
Oct. 27 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 3 Florida Atlantic
Nov. 10 at UTSA
Nov. 17 at Charlotte
Nov. 24 Marshall

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (11-3, 8-0)
Boca Raton, FL
Sept. 1 at Oklahoma
Sept. 8 Air Force
Sept.15 Bethune-Cookman
Sept.22 at UCF
Sept.29 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 6 Old Dominion
Oct. 20 at Marshall
Oct. 27 Louisiana Tech
Nov. 3 at FIU
Nov. 10 Western Kentucky
Nov. 17 at North Texas
Nov. 24 Charlotte

LOUISIANA TECH (7-6, 4-4)
Ruston, LA
Sept. 1 at South Alabama
Sept. 8 Southern
Sept.22 at LSU
Sept.29 at North Texas
Oct. 6 UAB
Oct. 13 at UTSA
Oct. 20 UTEP
Oct. 27 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 3 at Mississippi State
Nov. 10 Rice
Nov. 17 at Southern Miss
Nov. 24 Western Kentucky

MARSHALL (7-6, 3-5)
Huntington, WV
Sept. 1 at Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 8 Eastern Kentucky
Sept.15 at South Carolina
Sept.22 NC State
Sept.29 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 5 Middle Tennessee
Oct. 13 at Old Dominion
Oct. 20 Florida Atlantic
Nov. 3 at Southern Miss
Nov. 10 Charlotte
Nov. 17 UTSA
Nov. 24 at FIU

MIDDLE TENNESSEE (7-6, 4-4)
Murfreesboro, TN
Sept. 1 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 8 Tennessee-Martin
Sept.15 at Georgia
Sept.29 Florida Atlantic
Oct. 5 at Marshall
Oct. 13 at FIU
Oct. 20 Charlotte
Oct. 27 at Old Dominion
Nov. 2 Western Kentucky
Nov. 10 at UTEP
Nov. 17 at Kentucky
Nov. 24 UAB

NORTH TEXAS (9-5, 7-1)
Denton, TX
Sept. 1 SMU
Sept. 8 Incarnate Word
Sept.15 at Arkansas
Sept.22 at Liberty
Sept.29 Louisiana Tech
Oct. 6 at UTEP
Oct. 13 Southern Miss
Oct. 20 at UAB
Oct. 27 Rice
Nov. 10 at Old Dominion
Nov. 17 Florida Atlantic
Nov. 24 at UTSA

OLD DOMINION (5-7, 3-5)
Norfolk, VA
Sept. 1 at Liberty
Sept. 8 FIU
Sept.15 at Charlotte
Sept.22 Virginia Tech
Sept.29 at East Carolina
Oct. 6 at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 13 Marshall
Oct. 20 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 27 Middle Tennessee
Nov. 10 North Texas
Nov. 17 VMI
Nov. 24 at Rice

RICE (1-11, 1-7)
Houston, TX
Aug. 25 Prairie View A&M
Sept. 1 Houston
Sept. 8 at Hawaii
Sept.22 at Southern Miss
Sept.29 at Wake Forest
Oct. 6 UTSA
Oct. 13 UAB
Oct. 20 at FIU
Oct. 27 at North Texas
Nov. 3 UTEP
Nov. 10 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 17 at LSU
Nov. 24 Old Dominion

SOUTHERN MISS (8-5, 6-2)
Hattiesburg, MS
Sept. 1 Jackson State
Sept. 8 UL Monroe
Sept.15 at Appalachian State
Sept.22 Rice
Sept.29 at Auburn
Oct. 13 at North Texas
Oct. 20 UTSA
Oct. 27 at Charlotte
Nov. 3 Marshall
Nov. 10 at UAB
Nov. 17 Louisiana Tech
Nov. 24 at UTEP

UAB (8-5, 6-2)
Birmingham, AL
Sept. 1 Savannah State
Sept. 8 at Coastal Carolina
Sept.15 Tulane
Sept.29 Charlotte
Oct. 6 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 13 at Rice
Oct. 20 North Texas
Oct. 27 at UTEP
Nov. 3 UTSA
Nov. 10 Southern Miss
Nov. 17 at Texas A&M
Nov. 24 at Middle Tennessee

UTEP (0-12, 0-8)
El Paso, TX
Sept. 1 Northern Arizona
Sept. 8 at UNLV
Sept.15 at Tennessee
Sept.22 New Mexico State
Sept.29 at UTSA
Oct. 6 North Texas
Oct. 20 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 27 UAB
Nov. 3 at Rice
Nov. 10 Middle Tennessee
Nov. 17 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 24 Southern Miss

UTSA (6-5, 3-5)
San Antonio, TX
Sept. 1 at Arizona State
Sept. 8 Baylor
Sept.15 at Kansas State
Sept.22 Texas State
Sept.29 UTEP
Oct. 6 at Rice
Oct. 13 Louisiana Tech
Oct. 20 at Southern Miss
Nov. 3 at UAB
Nov. 10 FIU
Nov. 17 at Marshall
Nov. 24 North Texas

WESTERN KENTUCKY (7-6, 5-3)
Bowling Green, KY
Aug. 31 at Wisconsin
Sept. 8 Maine
Sept.15 at Louisville
Sept.22 at Ball State
Sept.29 Marshall
Oct. 13 at Charlotte
Oct. 20 Old Dominion
Oct. 27 FIU
Nov. 2 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 10 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 17 UTEP
Nov. 24 at Louisiana Tech


Louisiana Tech


Florida Atlantic


Toledo


San Diego State

MAC

AKRON (7-7, 6-2)
Akron, OH
Sept. 1 at Nebraska
Sept. 8 Morgan State
Sept.15 at Northwestern
Sept.22 at Iowa State
Oct. 6 Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 13 at Buffalo
Oct. 20 at Kent State
Oct. 27 Central Michigan
Nov. 1 Northern Illinois
Nov. 10 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 17 Bowling Green
Nov. 23 at Ohio

BALL STATE (2-10, 0-8)
Muncie, IN
Aug.30 Central Conn. State
Sept. 8 at Notre Dame
Sept.15 at Indiana
Sept.22 Western Kentucky
Sept.29 Kent State
Oct. 6 Northern Illinois
Oct. 13 at Central Michigan
Oct. 20 Eastern Michigan
Oct. 25 at Ohio
Oct. 31 at Toledo
Nov. 13 Western Michigan
Nov. 20 at Miami (Ohio)

BOWLING GREEN (2-10, 2-6)
Bowling Green, OH
Sept. 1 at Oregon
Sept. 8 Maryland
Sept.15 Eastern Kentucky
Sept.22 Miami (Ohio)
Sept.29 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6 at Toledo
Oct. 13 Western Michigan
Oct. 20 at Ohio
Oct. 30 Kent State
Nov. 10 at Central Michigan
Nov. 17 at Akron
Nov. 23 Buffalo

BUFFALO (6-6, 4-4)
Buffalo, NY
Sept. 1 Delaware State
Sept. 8 at Temple
Sept.15 Eastern Michigan
Sept.22 at Rutgers
Sept.29 Army
Oct. 6 at Central Michigan
Oct. 13 Akron
Oct. 20 at Toledo
Oct. 30 Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 6 Kent State
Nov. 14 at Ohio
Nov. 23 at Bowling Green

CENTRAL MICHIGAN (8-5, 6-2)
Mt. Pleasant, MI
Sept. 1 at Kentucky
Sept. 8 Kansas
Sept.15 at Northern Illinois
Sept.22 Maine
Sept.29 at Michigan State
Oct. 6 Buffalo
Oct. 13 Ball State
Oct. 20 Western Michigan
Oct. 27 at Akron
Nov. 3 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 10 Bowling Green
Nov. 23 at Toledo

EASTERN MICHIGAN (5-7, 3-5)
Ypsilanti, MI
Aug.31 Monmouth
Sept. 8 at Purdue
Sept.15 at Buffalo
Sept.22 at San Diego State
Sept.29 Northern Illinois
Oct. 6 at Western Michigan
Oct. 13 Toledo
Oct. 20 at Ball State
Oct. 27 Army
Nov. 3 Central Michigan
Nov. 10 Akron
Nov. 23 at Kent State

KENT STATE (2-10, 1-7)
Kent, OH
Sept. 1 at Illinois
Sept. 8 Howard
Sept.15 at Penn State
Sept.22 at Ole Miss
Sept.29 at Ball State
Oct. 6 Ohio
Oct. 13 at Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 20 Akron
Oct. 30 at Bowling Green
Nov. 6 at Buffalo
Nov. 15 Toledo
Nov. 23 Eastern Michigan

MIAMI (OHIO) (5-7, 4-4)
Oxford, OH
Sept. 1 Marshall
Sept. 8 at Cincinnati #
Sept.15 at Minnesota
Sept.22 at Bowling Green
Sept.29 Western Michigan
Oct. 6 at Akron
Oct. 13 Kent State
Oct. 20 at Army
Oct. 30 at Buffalo
Nov. 7 Ohio
Nov. 14 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 20 Ball State
#Paul Brown Stadium

NORTHERN ILLINOIS (8-5, 6-2)
DeKalb, IL
Sept. 1 at Iowa
Sept. 8 Utah
Sept.15 Central Michigan
Sept.22 at Florida State
Sept.29 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 6 at Ball State
Oct. 13 Ohio
Oct. 27 at BYU
Nov. 1 at Akron
Nov. 7 Toledo
Nov. 14 Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 20 at Western Michigan

OHIO (9-4, 5-3)
Athens, OH
Sept. 1 Howard
Sept.15 at Virginia
Sept.22 at Cincinnati
Sept.29 Massachusetts
Oct. 6 at Kent State
Oct. 13 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20 Bowling Green
Oct. 25 Ball State
Nov. 1 at Western Michigan
Nov. 7 at Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 14 Buffalo
Nov. 23 Akron

TOLEDO (11-3, 7-1)
Toledo, OH
Sept. 1 VMI
Sept.15 Miami (Fla.)
Sept.22 Nevada
Sept.29 at Fresno State
Oct. 6 Bowling Green
Oct. 13 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 20 Buffalo
Oct. 25 at Western Michigan
Oct. 31 Ball State
Nov. 7 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 15 at Kent State
Nov. 23 Central Michigan

WESTERN MICHIGAN (6-6, 4-4)
Kalamazoo, MI
Aug.31 Syracuse
Sept. 8 at Michigan
Sept.15 Delaware State
Sept.22 at Georgia State
Sept.29 at Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 6 Eastern Michigan
Oct. 13 at Bowling Green
Oct. 20 at Central Michigan
Oct. 25 Toledo
Nov. 1 Ohio
Nov. 13 at Ball State
Nov. 20 Northern Illinois

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE (5-7, 4-4)
Colorado Springs, CO
Sept. 1 Stony Brook
Sept. 8 at Florida Atlantic
Sept.22 at Utah State
Sept.29 Nevada
Oct. 6 Navy
Oct. 13 at San Diego State
Oct. 20 at UNLV
Oct. 27 Boise State
Nov. 3 at Army
Nov. 10 New Mexico
Nov. 17 at Wyoming
Nov. 24 Colorado State

BOISE STATE (11-3, 7-1)
Boise, ID
Sept. 1 at Troy
Sept. 8 Connecticut
Sept.15 at Oklahoma State
Sept.29 at Wyoming
Oct. 6 San Diego State
Oct. 13 at Nevada
Oct. 19 Colorado State
Oct. 27 at Air Force
Nov. 3 BYU
Nov. 10 Fresno State
Nov. 17 at New Mexico
Nov. 24 Utah State

COLORADO STATE (7-6, 5-3)
Fort Collins, CO
Aug.25 Hawaii
Aug.31 vs. Colorado #
Sept. 8 Arkansas
Sept.15 at Florida
Sept.22 Illinois State
Oct. 6 at San José State
Oct. 13 New Mexico
Oct. 19 at Boise State
Oct. 27 Wyoming
Nov. 10 at Nevada
Nov. 17 Utah State
Nov. 24 at Air Force
#Denver, CO

FRESNO STATE (10-4, 7-1)
Fresno, CA
Sept. 1 Idaho
Sept. 8 at Minnesota
Sept.15 at UCLA
Sept.29 Toledo
Oct. 6 at Nevada
Oct. 13 Wyoming
Oct. 20 at New Mexico
Oct. 27 Hawaii
Nov. 3 at UNLV
Nov. 10 at Boise State
Nov. 17 San Diego State
Nov. 24 San Jose State

HAWAII (3-9, 1-7)
Honolulu, HI
Aug.25 at Colorado State
Sept. 1 Navy
Sept. 8 Rice
Sept.15 at Army
Sept.22 Duquesne
Sept.29 at San Jose State
Oct. 6 Wyoming
Oct. 13 at BYU
Oct. 20 Nevada
Oct. 27 at Fresno State
Nov. 3 Utah State
Nov. 17 UNLV
Nov. 24 at San Diego State

NEVADA (4-8, 3-5)
Reno, NV
Sept. 1 Portland State
Sept. 8 at Vanderbilt
Sept.15 Oregon State
Sept.22 at Toledo
Sept.29 at Air Force
Oct. 6 Fresno State
Oct. 13 Boise State
Oct. 20 at Hawaii
Oct. 27 San Diego State
Nov. 10 Colorado State
Nov. 17 at San José State
Nov. 24 at UNLV

NEW MEXICO (3-9, 1-7)
Albuquerque, NM
Sept. 1 Incarnate Word
Sept. 8 at Wisconsin
Sept.15 at New Mexico State
Sept.29 Liberty
Oct. 6 at UNLV
Oct. 13 at Colorado State
Oct. 20 Fresno State
Oct. 27 at Utah State
Nov. 3 San Diego State
Nov. 10 at Air Force
Nov. 17 Boise State
Nov. 24 Wyoming

SAN DIEGO STATE (10-3, 6-2)
San Diego, CA
Aug.31 at Stanford
Sept. 8 Sacramento State
Sept.15 Arizona State
Sept.22 Eastern Michigan
Oct. 6 at Boise State
Oct. 13 Air Force
Oct. 20 San José State
Oct. 27 at Nevada
Nov. 3 at New Mexico
Nov. 10 UNLV
Nov. 17 at Fresno State
Nov. 24 Hawaii

Oklahoma: Layne Murdoch; Florida Atlantic:: Courtesy FAU Athletics; Toledo: The University of Toledo; SDSU: Ernie Anderson, SDSU Athletic Media Relations; LA Tech: Ben Breeland La Tech Athletics

SAN JOSE STATE (2-11, 1-7)
San Jose, CA
Aug. 30 UC Davis
Sept. 8 at Washington State
Sept. 15 at Oregon
Sept. 29 Hawaii
Oct. 6 Colorado State
Oct. 13 Army
Oct. 20 at San Diego State
Oct. 27 UNLV
Nov. 3 at Wyoming
Nov. 10 at Utah State
Nov. 17 Nevada
Nov. 24 at Fresno State

UNLV (5-7, 4-4)
Las Vegas, NV
Sept. 1 at USC
Sept. 8 UTEP
Sept. 15 Prairie View A&M
Sept. 22 at Arkansas State
Oct. 6 New Mexico
Oct. 13 at Utah State
Oct. 20 Air Force
Oct. 27 at San Jose State
Nov. 3 Fresno State
Nov. 10 at San Diego State
Nov. 17 at Hawaii
Nov. 24 Nevada

UTAH STATE (6-7, 4-4)
Logan, UT
Aug. 31 at Michigan State
Sept. 8 New Mexico State
Sept. 13 Tennessee Tech
Sept. 22 Air Force
Oct. 5 at BYU
Oct. 13 UNLV
Oct. 20 at Wyoming
Oct. 27 New Mexico
Nov. 3 at Hawaii
Nov. 10 San Jose State
Nov. 17 at Colorado State
Nov. 24 at Boise State

WYOMING (8-5, 5-3)
Laramie, WY
Aug. 25 at New Mexico State
Sept. 1 Washington State
Sept. 8 at Missouri
Sept. 15 Wofford
Sept. 29 Boise State
Oct. 6 at Hawaii
Oct. 13 at Fresno State
Oct. 20 Utah State
Oct. 27 at Colorado State
Nov. 3 San Jose State
Nov. 17 Air Force
Nov. 24 at New Mexico

PAC-12

ARIZONA (7-6, 5-4)
Tucson, AZ
Sept. 1 BYU
Sept. 8 at Houston
Sept. 15 Southern Utah
Sept. 22 at Oregon State
Sept. 29 USC
Oct. 6 California
Oct. 12 at Utah
Oct. 20 at UCLA
Oct. 27 Oregon
Nov. 2 Colorado
Nov. 17 at Washington State
Nov. 24 Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE (7-6, 6-3)
Tempe, AZ
Sept. 1 UTSA
Sept. 8 Michigan State
Sept. 15 at San Diego State
Sept. 22 at Washington
Sept. 29 Oregon State
Oct. 6 at Colorado
Oct. 18 Stanford
Oct. 27 at USC
Nov. 3 Utah
Nov. 10 UCLA
Nov. 17 at Oregon
Nov. 24 at Arizona

CALIFORNIA (5-7, 3-6)
Berkeley, CA
Sept. 1 North Carolina
Sept. 8 at BYU
Sept. 15 Idaho State
Sept. 29 Oregon
Oct. 6 at Arizona
Oct. 13 UCLA
Oct. 20 at Oregon State
Oct. 27 Washington
Nov. 3 at Washington State
Nov. 10 at USC
Nov. 17 Stanford
Nov. 24 Colorado

COLORADO (5-7, 2-7)
Boulder, CO
Sept. 1 vs. Colorado State #
Sept. 8 at Nebraska
Sept. 15 New Hampshire
Sept. 28 UCLA
Oct. 6 Arizona State
Oct. 13 at USC
Oct. 20 at Washington
OCT. 27 Oregon State
Nov. 2 at Arizona
Nov. 10 Washington State
Nov. 17 Utah
Nov. 24 at California
#Denver, CO

OREGON (7-6, 4-5)
Eugene, OR
Sept. 1 Bowling Green
Sept. 8 Portland State
Sept. 15 San Jose State
Sept. 22 Stanford
Sept. 29 at California
Oct. 13 Washington
Oct. 20 at Washington State
Oct. 27 at Arizona
Nov. 3 UCLA
Nov. 10 at Utah
Nov. 17 Arizona State
Nov. 23 at Oregon State

OREGON STATE (1-11, 0-9)
Corvallis, OR
Sept. 1 at Ohio State
Sept. 8 Southern Utah
Sept. 15 at Nevada
Sept. 22 Arizona
Sept. 29 at Arizona State
Oct. 6 Washington State
Oct. 20 California
Oct. 27 at Colorado
Nov. 3 USC
Nov. 10 at Stanford
Nov. 17 at Washington
Nov. 23 Oregon

STANFORD (9-5, 7-2)
Stanford, CA
Aug. 31 San Diego State
Sept. 8 USC
Sept. 15 UC Davis
Sept. 22 at Oregon
Sept. 29 at Notre Dame
Oct. 6 Utah
Oct. 18 at Arizona State
Oct. 27 Washington State
Nov. 3 at Washington
Nov. 10 Oregon State
Nov. 17 at California
Nov. 24 at UCLA

UCLA (6-7, 4-5)
Los Angeles, CA
Sept. 1 Cincinnati
Sept. 8 at Oklahoma
Sept. 15 Fresno State
Sept. 28 at Colorado
Oct. 6 Washington
Oct. 13 at California
Oct. 20 Arizona
Oct. 26 Utah
Nov. 3 at Oregon
Nov. 10 at Arizona State
Nov. 17 USC
Nov. 24 Stanford

USC (11-3, 8-1)
Los Angeles, CA
Sept. 1 UNLV
Sept. 8 at Stanford
Sept. 15 at Texas
Sept. 21 Washington State
Sept. 29 at Arizona
Oct. 13 Colorado
Oct. 20 at Utah
Oct. 27 Arizona State
Nov. 3 at Oregon State
Nov. 10 California
Nov. 17 at UCLA
Nov. 24 Notre Dame

UTAH (7-6, 3-6)
Salt Lake City, UT
Aug. 30 Weber State
Sept. 8 at Northern Illinois
Sept. 15 Washington
Sept. 29 at Washington State
Oct. 6 at Stanford
Oct. 12 Arizona
Oct. 20 USC
Oct. 26 at UCLA
Nov. 3 at Arizona State
Nov. 10 Oregon
Nov. 17 at Colorado
Nov. 24 BYU

WASHINGTON (10-3, 6-2)
Seattle, WA
Sept. 1 vs Auburn #
Sept. 8 North Dakota
Sept. 15 at Utah
Sept. 22 Arizona State
Sept. 29 BYU
Oct. 6 at UCLA
Oct. 13 at Oregon
Oct. 20 Colorado
Oct. 27 at California
Nov. 3 Stanford
Nov. 17 Oregon State
Nov. 23 at Washington State
#Atlanta, GA


Auburn

WASHINGTON STATE (9-4, 6-3)
Pullman, WA
Sept. 1 at Wyoming
Sept. 8 San Jose State
Sept. 15 Eastern Washington
Sept. 21 at USC
Sept. 29 Utah
Oct. 6 at Oregon State
Oct. 20 Oregon
Oct. 27 at Stanford
Nov. 3 California
Nov. 10 at Colorado
Nov. 17 Arizona
Nov. 23 Washington

SEC

ALABAMA (13-1, 7-1)
Tuscaloosa, AL
Sept. 1 vs. Louisville #
Sept. 8 Arkansas State
Sept. 15 at Ole Miss
Sept. 22 Texas A&M
Sept. 29 Louisiana
Oct. 6 at Arkansas
Oct. 13 Missouri
Oct. 20 at Tennessee
Nov. 3 at LSU
Nov. 10 Mississippi State
Nov. 17 The Citadel
Nov. 24 Auburn
#Orlando, FL

ARKANSAS (4-8, 1-7)
Fayetteville, AR
Sept. 1 Eastern Illinois
Sept. 8 at Colorado State
Sept. 15 North Texas
Sept. 22 at Auburn
Sept. 29 vs. Texas A&M #
Oct. 6 Alabama
Oct. 13 vs. Ole Miss %
Oct. 20 Tulsa
Oct. 27 Vanderbilt
Nov. 10 LSU
Nov. 17 at Mississippi State
Nov. 24 at Missouri
#Arlington, TX %Little Rock, AR

AUBURN (10-4, 7-1)
Auburn, AL
Sept. 1 vs. Washington #
Sept. 8 Alabama State
Sept. 15 LSU
Sept. 22 Arkansas
Sept. 29 Southern Miss
Oct. 6 at Mississippi State
Oct. 13 Tennessee
Oct. 20 at Ole Miss
Nov. 3 Texas A&M
Nov. 10 at Georgia
Nov. 17 Liberty
Nov. 24 at Alabama
#Atlanta, GA

FLORIDA (4-7, 3-5)
Gainesville, FL
Sept. 1 Charleston Southern
Sept. 8 Kentucky
Sept. 15 Colorado State
Sept. 22 at Tennessee
Sept. 29 at Mississippi State
Oct. 6 LSU
Oct. 13 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27 vs. Georgia #
Nov. 3 Missouri
Nov. 10 South Carolina
Nov. 17 Idaho
Nov. 24 at Florida State
#Jacksonville, FL

GEORGIA (13-2, 7-1)
Athens, GA
Sept. 1 Austin Peay
Sept. 8 at South Carolina
Sept. 15 Middle Tennessee
Sept. 22 at Missouri
Sept. 29 Tennessee
Oct. 6 Vanderbilt
Oct. 13 at LSU
Oct. 27 vs Florida #
Nov. 3 at Kentucky
Nov. 10 Auburn
Nov. 17 Massachusetts
Nov. 24 Georgia Tech
#Jacksonville, FL

KENTUCKY (7-6, 4-4)
Lexington, KY
Sept. 1 Central Michigan
Sept. 8 at Florida
Sept. 15 Murray State
Sept. 22 Mississippi State
Sept. 29 South Carolina
Oct. 6 at Texas A&M
Oct. 20 Vanderbilt
Oct. 27 at Missouri
Nov. 3 Georgia
Nov. 10 at Tennessee
Nov. 17 Middle Tennessee
Nov. 24 at Louisville

LSU (9-4, 6-2)
Baton Rouge, LA
Sept. 2 vs. Miami #
Sept. 8 SE Louisiana
Sept. 15 at Auburn
Sept. 22 Louisiana Tech
Sept. 29 Ole Miss
Oct. 6 at Florida
Oct. 13 Georgia
Oct. 20 Mississippi State
Nov. 3 Alabama
Nov. 10 at Arkansas
Nov. 17 Rice
Nov. 24 at Texas A&M
#Arlington, TX

Auburn, Vanderbilt: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; South Alabama: Scott Donaldson/South Alabama Strategic Communications

MISSISSIPPI STATE (9-4, 4-4)
Starkville, MS
Sept. 1 Stephen F. Austin
Sept. 8 at Kansas State
Sept.15 Louisiana
Sept.22 at Kentucky
Sept.29 Florida
Oct. 6 Auburn
Oct. 20 at LSU
Oct. 27 Texas A&M
Nov. 3 Louisiana Tech
Nov. 10 at Alabama
Nov. 17 Arkansas
Nov. 22 at Ole Miss

MISSOURI (7-6, 4-4)
Columbia, MO
Sept. 1 Tennessee-Martin
Sept. 8 Wyoming
Sept.15 at Purdue
Sept.22 Georgia
Oct. 6 at South Carolina
Oct. 13 at Alabama
Oct. 20 Memphis
Oct. 27 Kentucky
Nov. 3 at Florida
Nov. 10 Vanderbilt
Nov. 17 at Tennessee
Nov. 24 Arkansas

OLE MISS (6-6, 3-5)
Oxford, MS
Sept. 1 vs. Texas Tech #
Sept. 8 Southern Illinois
Sept.15 Alabama
Sept.22 Kent State
Sept.29 at LSU
Oct. 6 UL Monroe
Oct. 13 vs. Arkansas %
Oct. 20 Auburn
Nov. 3 South Carolina
Nov. 10 at Texas A&M
Nov. 17 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 22 Mississippi State
#Houston, TX %Little Rock, AR

SOUTH CAROLINA (9-4, 5-3)
Columbia, SC
Sept. 1 Coastal Carolina
Sept. 8 Georgia
Sept.15 Marshall
Sept.22 at Vanderbilt
Sept.29 at Kentucky
Oct. 6 Missouri
Oct. 13 Texas A&M
Oct. 27 Tennessee
Nov. 3 at Ole Miss
Nov. 10 at Florida
Nov. 17 Chattanooga
Nov. 24 at Clemson

TENNESSEE (4-8, 0-8)
Knoxville, TN
Sept. 1 vs. West Virginia #
Sept. 8 East Tennessee St.
Sept.15 UTEP
Sept.22 Florida
Sept.29 at Georgia
Oct. 13 at Auburn
Oct. 20 Alabama
Oct. 27 at South Carolina
Nov. 3 Charlotte
Nov. 10 Kentucky
Nov. 17 Missouri
Nov. 24 at Vanderbilt
#Charlotte, NC

TEXAS A&M (7-6, 4-4)
College Station, TX
Aug.30 Northwestern State
Sept. 8 Clemson
Sept.15 UL Monroe
Sept.22 at Alabama
Sept.29 vs Arkansas #
Oct. 6 Kentucky
Oct. 13 at South Carolina
Oct. 27 at Mississippi State
Nov. 3 at Auburn
Nov. 10 Ole Miss
Nov. 17 UAB
Nov. 24 LSU
#Arlington, TX



VANDERBILT (5-7, 1-7)
Nashville, TN
Sept. 1 Middle Tennessee
Sept. 8 Nevada
Sept.15 at Notre Dame
Sept.22 South Carolina
Sept.29 Tennessee State
Oct. 6 at Georgia
Oct. 13 Florida
Oct. 20 at Kentucky
Oct. 27 at Arkansas
Nov. 10 at Missouri
Nov. 17 Ole Miss
Nov. 24 Tennessee

SUN BELT

APPALACHIAN STATE (9-4, 7-1)
Boone, NC
Sept. 1 at Penn State
Sept. 8 at Charlotte
Sept.15 Southern Miss
Sept.22 Gardner-Webb
Sept.29 South Alabama
Oct. 9 at Arkansas State
Oct. 20 Louisiana
Oct. 25 at Georgia Southern
Nov. 3 at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 10 at Texas State
Nov. 17 Georgia State
Nov. 24 Troy

ARKANSAS STATE (7-5, 6-2)
Jonesboro, AR
Sept. 1 SE Missouri
Sept. 8 at Alabama
Sept.15 at Tulsa
Sept.22 UNLV
Sept.29 at Georgia Southern
Oct. 9 Appalachian State
Oct. 18 Georgia State
Oct. 27 at Louisiana
Nov. 3 South Alabama
Nov. 10 at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 17 UL Monroe
Nov. 24 at Texas State

COASTAL CAROLINA (3-9, 2-6)
Conway, SC
Sept. 1 at South Carolina
Sept. 8 UAB
Sept.15 Campbell
Sept.22 at Louisiana
Sept.29 at Troy
Oct. 13 UL Monroe
Oct. 20 at Massachusetts
Oct. 27 at Georgia State
Nov. 3 Appalachian State
Nov. 10 Arkansas State
Nov. 17 Georgia Southern
Nov. 24 at South Alabama

GEORGIA SOUTHERN (2-10, 2-6)
Statesboro, GA
Sept. 1 South Carolina State
Sept. 8 Massachusetts
Sept.15 at Clemson
Sept.29 Arkansas State
Oct. 6 South Alabama
Oct. 11 at Texas State
Oct. 20 at New Mexico State
Oct. 25 Appalachian State
Nov. 3 at UL Monroe
Nov. 10 Troy
Nov. 17 at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 24 at Georgia State

GEORGIA STATE (7-5, 5-3)
Atlanta, GA
Aug.30 Kennesaw State
Sept. 8 at NC State
Sept.14 at Memphis
Sept.22 Western Michigan
Sept.29 UL Monroe
Oct. 4 at Troy
Oct. 18 at Arkansas State
Oct. 27 Coastal Carolina
Nov. 3 Texas State
Nov. 10 at Louisiana
Nov. 17 at Appalachian State
Nov. 24 Georgia Southern

LOUISIANA (5-7, 4-4)
Lafayette, LA
Sept. 1 Grambling
Sept.15 at Mississippi State
Sept.22 Coastal Carolina
Sept.29 at Alabama
Oct. 6 at Texas State
Oct. 13 New Mexico State
Oct. 20 at Appalachian State
Oct. 27 Arkansas State
Nov. 3 at Troy
Nov. 10 Georgia State
Nov. 17 South Alabama
Nov. 24 at UL Monroe

UL MONROE (4-8, 4-4)
Monroe, LA
Sept. 1 SE Louisiana
Sept. 8 at Southern Miss
Sept.15 at Texas A&M
Sept.22 Troy
Sept.29 at Georgia State
Oct. 6 at Ole Miss
Oct. 13 at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 20 Texas State
Nov. 3 Georgia Southern
Nov. 10 at South Alabama
Nov. 17 at Arkansas State
Nov. 24 Louisiana



SOUTH ALABAMA (4-8, 3-5)
Mobile, AL
Sept. 1 Louisiana Tech
Sept. 8 at Oklahoma State
Sept.15 Texas State
Sept.22 at Memphis
Sept.29 at Appalachian State
Oct. 6 at Georgia Southern
Oct. 13 Alabama State
Oct. 23 Troy
Nov. 3 at Arkansas State
Nov. 10 UL Monroe
Nov. 17 at Louisiana
Nov. 24 Coastal Carolina

TEXAS STATE (2-10, 1-7)
San Marcos, TX
Sept. 1 at Rutgers
Sept. 8 Texas Southern
Sept.15 at South Alabama
Sept.22 at UTSA
Oct. 6 Louisiana
Oct. 11 Georgia Southern
Oct. 20 at UL Monroe
Oct. 27 New Mexico State
Nov. 3 at Georgia State
Nov. 10 Appalachian State
Nov. 17 at Troy
Nov. 24 Arkansas State

TROY (11-2, 7-1)
Troy, AL
Sept. 1 Boise State
Sept. 8 Florida A&M
Sept.15 at Nebraska
Sept.22 at UL Monroe
Sept.29 Coastal Carolina
Oct. 4 Georgia State
Oct. 13 at Liberty
Oct. 23 at South Alabama
Nov. 3 Louisiana
Nov. 10 at Georgia Southern
Nov. 17 Texas State
Nov. 24 at Appalachian State

INDEPENDENTS

ARMY (10-3)
West Point, NY
Sept. 1 at Duke
Sept. 8 Liberty
Sept.15 Hawaii
Sept.22 at Oklahoma
Sept.29 at Buffalo
Oct. 13 at San Jose State
Oct. 20 Miami (Ohio)
Oct. 27 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 3 Air Force
Nov. 10 Lafayette
Nov. 17 Colgate
Dec. 8 vs. Navy #
#Philadelphia, PA

BYU (4-9)
Provo, UT
Sept. 1 at Arizona
Sept. 8 California
Sept.15 at Wisconsin
Sept.22 McNeese State
Sept.29 at Washington
Oct. 5 Utah State
Oct. 13 Hawaii
Oct. 27 Northern Illinois
Nov. 3 at Boise State
Nov. 10 vs. Massachusetts #
Nov. 17 New Mexico State
Nov. 24 at Utah
#Foxboro, MA

LIBERTY (6-5)
Lynchburg, VA
Sept. 1 Old Dominion
Sept. 8 at Army
Sept.15 Norfolk State
Sept.22 North Texas
Sept.29 at New Mexico
Oct 6 at New Mexico State
Oct. 13 Troy
Oct. 20 Idaho State
Nov. 3 at Massachusetts
Nov. 10 at Virginia
Nov. 17 at Auburn
Nov. 24 New Mexico State

MASSACHUSETTS (4-8)
Amherst, MA
Aug.25 Duquesne
Sept. 1 at Boston College
Sept. 8 at Georgia Southern
Sept.15 at FIU
Sept.22 Charlotte
Sept.29 at Ohio
Oct. 6 South Florida
Oct. 20 Coastal Carolina
Oct. 27 at Connecticut
Nov. 3 Liberty
Nov. 10 vs BYU #
Nov. 17 at Georgia
#Foxboro, MA

NEW MEXICO STATE (7-6, 4-4)
Las Cruces, NM
Aug.25 Wyoming
Aug.30 at Minnesota
Sept. 8 at Utah State
Sept.15 New Mexico
Sept.22 at UTEP
Oct. 6 Liberty
Oct. 13 at Louisiana
Oct. 20 Georgia Southern
Oct. 27 at Texas State
Nov. 3 Alcorn State
Nov. 17 at BYU
Nov. 24 at Liberty

NOTRE DAME (10-3)
South Bend, IN
Sept. 1 Michigan
Sept. 8 Ball State
Sept.15 Vanderbilt
Sept.22 at Wake Forest
Sept.29 Stanford
Oct. 6 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 13 Pittsburgh
Oct. 27 vs. Navy #
Nov. 3 at Northwestern
Nov. 10 Florida State
Nov. 17 vs. Syracuse %
Nov. 24 at USC
#San Diego, CA %Bronx, NY

SIDELINE Spirit


BULLDOGS


BADGERS



CRIMSON TIDE



JAYHAWKS











All photos by Athlon Sports Photographers



EAGLES







BUCKEYES



LONGHORNS



BOILERMAKERS



SUN DEVILS



HORNED FROGS



HOOSIERS



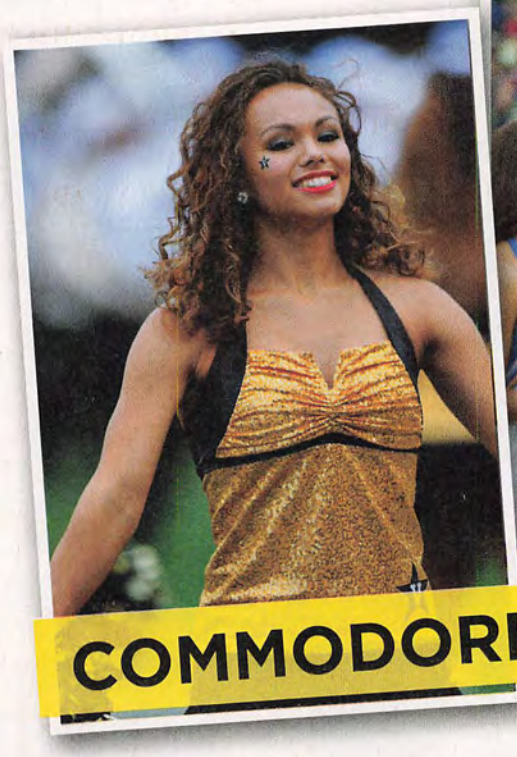
HAWKEYES



VOLUNTEERS



BLUE DEVILS



COMMODORES



BRUINS



GOLDEN BEARS



RAZORBACKS



HURRICANES



CYCLONES



REBELS



WOLVERINES



YELLOW JACKETS



TROJANS



College Football Tailgating 2018

By Michael Bradley



Ohio State

Drive around the parking lot before an MLB game, and you will probably see a few people preparing for the action with some food and drink. If it's not too cold, NHL and NBA fans might throw parties before their favorite teams play. And, of course, NFL games are always preceded by tailgate activity.

But when it comes to the fullest tailgating experience, nothing can touch college football. The parties start earlier, go longer and feature more pageantry and tradition than those staged by fans of other sports. Every school has its own personality, and the level of preparation and ages-old rituals are unlike those found at any other sporting experience.

The college football tailgating scene is the best around, and here are some of the top places to enjoy the fun.

Big Buckeye Bash

Under coach Urban Meyer, **Ohio State** boasts one of the most successful programs in the country, but Meyer needs a few more decades or so to catch up with the Buckeyes' fans, who are some of the best tailgaters around. Tens of thousands of fans who don't have tickets join the 100,000 or so who do to create a gigantic party in the massive shadow of Ohio Stadium, which sits on the banks of the Olentangy River. Get there early for the food and camaraderie but try to get into St. John Arena a few hours before kickoff for the band's "Skull Session," at which the team shows up before its walk to the stadium.

Army Maneuvers

If you're looking for color and pageantry, it's tough to beat the scene along the Hudson River. It starts three hours before game time, when the Cadets parade on "The Plain" in full formal dress. At the same time, Fort Putnam, which served as a base for the blockade of British ships, opens for touring, as does Black Knights Alley, a fan fest packed with food, drink and entertainment options. Be sure to fold up your tents early and get into Michie Stadium in time to see the 1,000 Cadets march onto the field. After that, parachutists deliver the game ball, and it's time for kickoff.

The Sooner The Better

You can pitch a tent on a grassy section around the stadium at Oklahoma and enjoy yourself with some friends and family, but the key to an OU tailgate party is moving around to meet up with the other fans, who pride themselves on being hospitable to other Sooners and to visitors as well. Make some time to stroll down Lindsey Street, which teems with fans and features a rather laissez-faire approach to the usual rules and regulations that prevail on non-game days. If you want to sample an Oklahoma tradition — and you are of age — have a Club Special, which was invented at the Twin Hills Golf & Country Club in Oklahoma City and is a Sooner fan specialty.

Ohio State, Mississippi State: AP; Georgia Jeanie Abell

(Hardly) Spartan Setting

Michigan State's nickname may connote a meager existence, but when it comes to tailgating, the MSU crowd knows its business. The typical pre-game activities prevail in East Lansing, but there are some special events fans should consider before they head in to see the Spartans. Even if it's an icy November Saturday, it's a good idea to get some ice cream at the Dairy Store. And fans of the band — and what college football aficionado isn't a fan of the band — ought to secure a good spot at Adams Field, where the band musters before the game and plays a concert before marching through fans down Red Cedar Road to Spartan Stadium.



Mississippi State

Before The Hedges

Georgia fans roar when Sanford Stadium P.A. announcer Brook Whitmire announces before kick-off, "It's Saturday in Athens, and time to tee it up betweeeeeen the hedges!" but there is still plenty to do before that famous declaration. Tailgates spring up all over, but the most popular spots are along Myers Quad and down Lumpkin Street. Make sure your attire is a little more formal than simply T-shirts and shorts, because this is the Deep South, after all, and football Saturdays are special events. Get a good spot next to the Dawg Walk route, along which the Georgia team processes from the center of campus to the stadium.

Bulldog Junction

There are lots all around Davis Wade Stadium in Starkville in which fans can prep for Mississippi State football action, but the real place to be is The Junction, which blends the school's great spirit with its history tied to the railroads that for years deposited students at MSU's campus. No cars are allowed at the Junction, but a tent city springs up beginning Friday afternoon, and the party rages until well after the final gun. Get there in time to see the Dawg Walk, during which the team parades through campus to the stadium, led by the band.



Georgia

The Center of it All

Spend enough time on Center Street in Blacksburg before a Virginia Tech game, and you might think the entire Commonwealth has converged on the campus. Every possible patch of grass is covered with revelers, and even the rooftops are filled with people prepping for the Hokies. Meanwhile, school parking lots reserved for students, faculty and staff during the week become party sites. If it's Homecoming, be sure to find members of Ranger Company running the game ball around campus. During the week leading up to the game, they log 100 miles. It's a great Saturday environment, and since VT is an annual Thursday night participant, there is a great early start to the weekend every season, too.

College Football Tailgating 2018



Bacon Cubano Sandwich

Smithfield Roasted Golden Rotisserie Tenderloin

Smithfield Original Hometown Bacon

French roll, sliced in half

Mayonnaise, to taste

2 slices baby Swiss cheese, both sliced in half (for 4 halves)

10 kosher dill pickle rounds

2 tablespoons butter

Optional:
Bacon Mustard

Directions

→ Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

→ Sear the whole tenderloin out of the package in a large skillet over medium heat for 4 minutes. Using tongs, flip the tenderloin and sear the pork's other side for another 4 minutes.*

→ Move the tenderloin to the oven and cook uncovered for 25 minutes on a baking sheet with a rack, flipping it halfway through.

→ Add into the oven the bacon, arranged in a single layer, side by side, on a baking sheet. Cook for 12 minutes (on the low end) and up to 17 minutes for crispy. Flip the bacon halfway through.

→ Once the tenderloin is done, remove from the oven and let rest 10 minutes. Then thinly slice.

→ Liberally slather both inside halves of your French roll with mayo. Top the bottom slice with bacon, then several tenderloin slices, the cheese, pickle slices and then the top piece of bread.

→ Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. (You can also use a griddle if you have one.) Add in the sandwich, using another skillet or plate to press the sandwich into the butter until golden brown, about 3-4 minutes. Add another tablespoon of butter into the skillet and flip the sandwich, repeating the pressing and cooking process.

→ Cut sandwich in half and serve! (Optional: serve with Bacon Mustard.)

PRO TIP:
*Before searing the pork, use a paper towel to pat it dry first. This helps give it a crispier sear.

NOTES: *EVERYTHING IS BETTER WITH BACON.* Everything. And it need not only be eaten at breakfast. We chose Hometown Original for this recipe, but Smithfield bacon also comes in Cherrywood Thick Cut and other flavors/cuts. All are smoked and cured to perfection.

Bacon Guacamole

Ingredients:

4 small **garlic cloves**, finely minced (or less if you're not so much into the garlic)

1 tablespoon **poblano pepper**, finely minced (or more if you like it hot; you can also use a spicier pepper if you prefer)

1 large **shallot**, finely minced

1 tsp **kosher salt**

1 tsp freshly ground **black pepper**

¼ cup fresh **cilantro**, chopped

2 large **avocados**

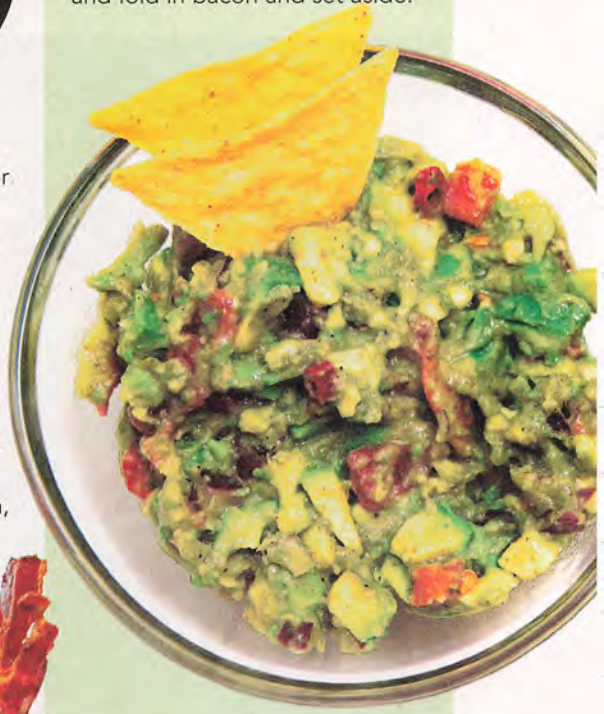
The juice of 1 large **lime**

1 vine-ripe or **heirloom tomato**, diced

5 pieces of **thick-cut bacon**, cooked and diced (I like mine crispy — it adds crunch)

Directions:

Dice bacon and place in a skillet over medium heat, cook until crisp about 7 minutes, remove drain and set aside. In a bowl add avocados, a pinch of pepper and salt, lime juice and mix well. Add cilantro, jalapeno, tomatoes, mix well and fold in bacon and set aside.



Buffalo Chicken Dip Mac & Cheese



Ingredients:

1 lb. chicken tenders, cooked in Buffalo chicken sauce (see below)*

Additional Buffalo chicken sauce for extra flavor (¼ – ½ cup to taste)

½ cup blue cheese crumbles

1 cup cream cheese

½ cup Greek yogurt

1 lb. pasta elbows, boiled in salted water and cooked until al denté

1 tablespoon green onions, thinly sliced for garnish

Buffalo Chicken Sauce

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tsp kosher salt

1½ tablespoons white vinegar

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/8 teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

2 teaspoons Tabasco sauce

¼ teaspoon black pepper

6 tablespoons Louisiana hot sauce

→ In a food processor, combine your cooked chicken and extra Buffalo chicken sauce (make enough to cover all of the chicken and another ¼ to ½ cup or so).

→ Pulse until the chicken is soft and fills 2 cups.

→ In a large mixing bowl, combine the chicken and buffalo sauce from the food processor along with your blue cheese, cream cheese, and Greek yogurt.

→ Mix well and then place into a 9"x 9" baking dish and bake for 20 minutes.

→ When the "dip" part of the dish is done, remove from the baking dish and combine in a large mixing bowl with your cooked pasta.

→ Stir together well and serve topped with green onion slices.

PUMPKIN SPICE CARAMEL COOKIE BARS

16.5 ounces **chocolate chip cookie dough** (homemade or store-bought)

25 **mini pretzels**, plus more for serving

Whipped cream

¾ cup **dates**, pitted

¼ cup **water**

1 teaspoon **dark brown sugar**

¼ cup **almond butter**

1¼ cup **rolled oats**

¼ cup **honey**

1 large **egg**

3 tablespoons 2% **Greek yogurt**

¼ fine **sea salt**

2 tablespoons **Hungry Fan® Pumpkin Spice Blend**, plus more for serving

→ Preheat oven to 375°F.

→ Grease a 9"x 9" baking dish with butter or coconut oil. Set aside.

→ Combine your dates, water and brown sugar in a small pot and cook over medium-high for 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Using a fork, mash the dates until it forms a sticky paste, adding in additional water if necessary. Stir in almond butter and set aside.

→ In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the rolled oats, honey, egg, yogurt, salt and pumpkin spice blend. Mix well.

→ Spoon the pumpkin spice blend into the baking dish, spreading evenly along the bottom.

→ Top with an evenly spaced layer of pretzels. Then top with the caramel date paste and then a layer of chocolate chip cookie dough.

→ Bake for 22 minutes.

→ Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes.

→ Slice into 9 equal pieces. Serve as is or top each bar with a dollop of whipped cream sprinkled with crushed pretzels and additional pumpkin spice.



For more information

Visit The Hungry Fan: @TheHungryFan on Twitter and Instagram or Facebook.com/thehungryfan

Photos courtesy The Hungry Fan

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

National Forecast: **15**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Michigan
Sept.	8	Ball State
Sept.	15	Vanderbilt
Sept.	22	at Wake Forest
Sept.	29	Stanford
Oct.	6	at Virginia Tech
Oct.	13	Pittsburgh
Oct.	27	vs. Navy #
Nov.	3	at Northwestern
Nov.	10	Florida State
Nov.	17	vs. Syracuse %
Nov.	24	at USC

#San Diego %Bronx, NY

KEY IRISH

DRUE TRANQUILL, LB Veteran has overcome two torn ACLs and multiple position switches. Will be a critical piece of the Irish defense in his final season.

TE'VON CONEY, LB He didn't even start a game until the midway point of the '17 season, yet he led the team in tackles (116).

JULIAN LOVE, CB Playmaker extraordinaire with school records for passes broken up (20) and passes defensed (23).

KEY LOSSES

QUENTON NELSON, LG A mauler who parlayed his dynamic redshirt junior season into a first-round draft choice.

MIKE McGLINCHEY, LT He returned for a fifth year to form a massive tag-team duo on the left side with Nelson.

JOSH ADAMS, RB Big-play machine made a Heisman Trophy bid through October before finishing with 1,430 yards, a 6.9-yard average and nine TDs.

RISING STAR

Cole Kmet caught just two passes for 14 yards as a true freshman in 2017 amidst a logjam at tight end. His athleticism and pass-catching skills should shine as early as '18. His pitching skills already have as a 6'6", 255-pound left-handed reliever on the Irish baseball team.

Notre Dame is aiming for its first back-to-back double-digit-winning seasons since Lou Holtz was head coach in 1992-93. Winners of 10 games in two of the last three years, the Fighting Irish remain a difficult read, due largely to the ugly wart that was the 4–8 season in 2016. So was last year's September-October run for a Playoff berth a more accurate depiction of Notre Dame moving forward? Or does the collapse in November at Miami and Stanford say more about the up-and-down Brian Kelly regime? Notre Dame is 9–12 in November over the last five seasons.

The offensive line and rushing attack were the premier aspects of the '17 squad and were complemented by a vastly improved defense under one-and-done coordinator Mike Elko (now at Texas A&M). Clark Lea — Elko's protégé who has taken over as defensive coordinator — has nine starters returning with some of his best players up the middle at tackle and inside linebacker.

QUARTERBACKS As Notre Dame built an 8–1 record in '17, it was easy to overlook Brandon Wimbush's less-than-50-percent completion rate. The Irish were winning and the offense was, overall, productive. But when Notre Dame dropped two of its last three regular-season games as Wimbush struggled throwing the football — followed by his benching in the first half against LSU in the Citrus Bowl — the door opened for Ian Book, who led two touchdown drives in the fourth quarter to defeat the Tigers, 21–17. The doors of competition remained ajar in the spring, but Wimbush's experience, athleticism and red zone mastery (76 percent touchdown rate, eighth nationally) should keep him in the saddle. Despite his struggles throwing the football, Wimbush's 803 yards rushing and 14 rushing touchdowns cannot be discounted in offensive coordinator Chip Long's run-heavy attack. "There definitely is a difference in the way he is performing compared to last year," says Kelly of Wimbush. "If that continues, that puts us in a really good position at quarterback."

RUNNING BACKS Josh Adams, banged up frequently during his three years with the Irish, bypassed his final year of eligibility after totaling 1,430 yards (on a 6.9-yard average) and nine touchdowns. That thrusts speedy senior Dexter Williams and sophomore combo back Tony Jones Jr. into lead roles. Williams has breakaway speed. He also has had injury issues and difficulty mastering the playbook and pass protection, which limited him to 39 rushing attempts — and a 9.2-yard average — in '17.

RECEIVERS Equanimeous St. Brown, who had a breakout sophomore season and an inconsistent junior campaign, chose to bank on his NFL-level skills over the hope that Wimbush would improve his accuracy. Kevin Stepherson, a sensational receiver since his rookie season

5-YEAR WIN TREND



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)					
WR	81	Miles Boykin (Jr.)	88	Javon McKinley (So.)	
WR	**83**	**Chase Claypool (Jr.)**	8	Jafar Armstrong (Fr.)	
WR	87	Michael Young (So.)	10	Chris Finke (Jr.)	
LT	74	Liam Eichenberg (So.)	69	Aaron Banks (Fr.)	
LG	**78**	**Tommy Kraemer (So.)**	75	Josh Lugg (Fr.)	
C	**53**	**Sam Mustipher (Sr.)**	57	Trevor Ruhland (Jr.)	
RG	**71**	**Alex Bars (Sr.)**	76	Dillan Gibbons (Fr.)	
RT	72	Robert Hainsey (So.)	69	Aaron Banks (Fr.)	
TE	86	Alizé Mack (Jr.)	84	Cole Kmet (So.)	
QB	**7**	**Brandon Wimbush (Jr.)**	12	Ian Book (So.)	
RB	2	Dexter Williams (Sr.)	6	Tony Jones Jr. (So.)	
DEFENSE (9)					
DE	53	Khalid Kareem (Jr.)	91	Ade Ogundeji (So.)	
DT	**99**	**Jerry Tillery (Sr.)**	95	Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa (So.)	
NT	**55**	**Jonathan Bonner (Sr.)**	41	Kurt Hinish (So.)	
DE	**9**	**Daelin Hayes (Jr.)**	42	Julian Okwara (Jr.)	
SLB	22	Asmar Bilal (Jr.)	17	Isaiah Robertson (So.)	
MLB	**4**	**Te'von Coney (Sr.)**	45	Jonathan Jones (So.)	
WLB	**23**	**Drue Tranquill (Sr.)**	45	Jonathan Jones (So.)	
CB	20	Shaun Crawford (Jr.)	5	Troy Pride Jr. (Jr.)	
CB	**27**	**Julian Love (Jr.)**	**7**	**Nick Watkins (Sr.)**	
FS	**24**	**Nick Coleman (Sr.)**	14	Devin Studstill (Jr.)	
SS	11	Alohi Gilman (So.)	**21**	**Jalen Elliott (Jr.)**	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Justin Yoon (Sr.)	KR	87	Michael Young (So.)
P	85	Tyler Newsome (Sr.)	PR	10	Chris Finke (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

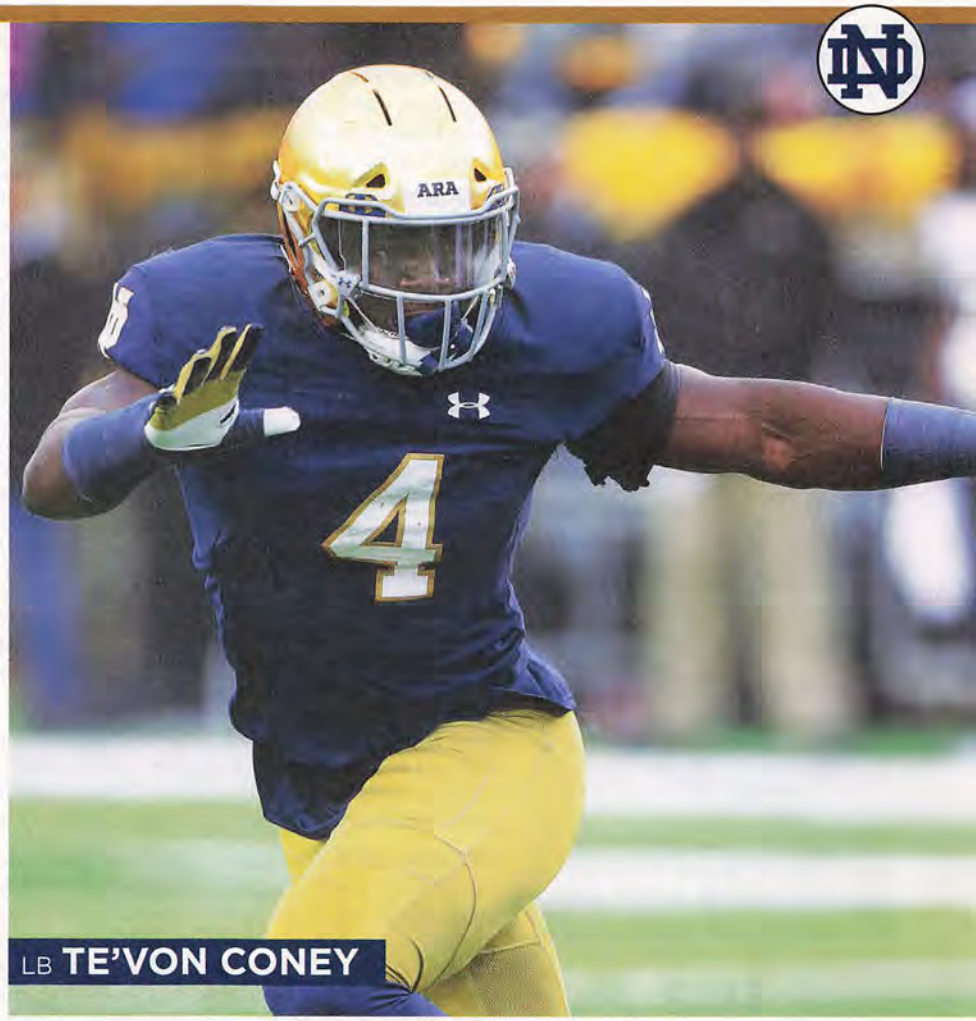
Tom Lynn

in '16, was dismissed from school after multiple run-ins with the law. That puts a ton of pressure on Miles Boykin and Chase Claypool. Boykin made a name for himself with a 55-yard catch-and-run to beat LSU in the Citrus Bowl. Claypool caught 29 passes for 402 yards and two TDs as a sophomore but is frequently criticized for a lack of consistency and focus. Sophomore Michael Young, who began the comeback against LSU with a touchdown reception in the fourth quarter, is small but fast and figures to be the third wideout in the equation. Chris Finke is an elusive former walk-on who could push his way into the lineup with his mastery of the playbook. Tight ends Alizé Mack and Cole Kmet have the skill sets to be one of the nation's top pass-catching tandems at the position, although Mack struggled in '17. "What plagued him last year was inconsistency," Kelly says. "Everything he did was inconsistent."

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN By alternating Tommy Kraemer and Robert Hainsey at right tackle last season, the Irish have the equivalent of four starters returning despite the departure of standouts Quenton Nelson and Mike McGlinchey at left guard and left tackle, respectively. The Irish will continue a rotation on the offensive line and may even expand it a bit. They're set at center with 25-game starter Sam Mustipher taking over as the alpha dog up front with right guard Alex Bars (27 starts). Kraemer likely moves from right tackle to left guard, while Hainsey could end up at either tackle spot, with sophomore Liam Eichenberg manning the other. Junior Trevor Ruhland is at worst the backup to Mustipher at center while vying at left guard along with promising redshirt freshman Josh Lugg.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Last year's apparent weakness quickly has become the strength of the '18 defense. Veterans Jerry Tillery (tackle) and Jonathan Bonner (nose) will man the interior while juniors Daelin Hayes, Khalid Kareem and Julian Okwara represent the pass-rush ends, along with up-and-comer Ade Ogundeji. "Khalid is great at working your weaknesses," says Hainsey, who battles Kareem in practice. What differentiates this line from recent Notre Dame fronts is the depth; sophomores Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa and Kurt Hinish — both of whom played extensively as freshmen — will offer more-than-solid backup work behind Tillery and Bonner. It won't be a surprise if freshman Jayson Ademilola emerges at tackle or strong-side end with the decision by Jay Hayes to bypass a fifth year of eligibility. Big-bodied junior Micah Dew-Treadway is an option at both interior defensive line spots.

LINEBACKERS If the adage is true that strength up the middle is key to success, Notre Dame is in good shape defensively. Inside linebackers Te'von Coney and Drue Tranquill give Notre Dame two of the most aggressive, instinctive players on the roster. Coney didn't emerge until the middle of '17, but he finished the season playing All-America-level football, with 17 tackles in the Citrus Bowl. Tranquill, who played the Rover (outside backer) position well, moves to Buck (weak side) linebacker, where he'll be in a sea-



LB **TE'VON CONEY**

SCOUTING THE FIGHTING IRISH

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP NOTRE DAME

"Brian (Kelly) didn't get nearly enough credit for knowing when he needed to change — and then changing. Trust me, that's a big deal in this business. … I still think Brandon Wimbush is the answer at quarterback. I know (Ian) Book won that bowl game, but Wimbush does more things that can stress a defense. Brian is one of the best teachers of quarterbacks in college football. He's not going to overthink it. They've shown they can win a lot of games with Wimbush. I'm not sure you can win a lot of games with the other guy, at least not yet. … Losing (defensive coordinator) Mike Elko is going to hurt. He's one of the best in our business, and had been under the radar until Brian brought him to Notre Dame. I know they elevated one of his guys (linebackers coach Clark Lea), but Elko is one of those guys that has a real feel for the game and what to call. … I don't buy all of that Brian Kelly hot seat stuff. You're really going to run off a guy who has done what he has? It's not 1979 anymore, you're not the only team on television, your facilities aren't exactly state of the art. They should be elated they have a coach of that caliber."

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH Brian Kelly
RECORD AT SCHOOL 69-34 (8 years)
CAREER RECORD 240-91-2 (28 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR Chip Long
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR Clark Lea
LOCATION South Bend, IN
STADIUM Notre Dame Stadium (77,622)

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		
Offense	28.0	108
Defense	30.3	89
Margin	**-2.3**	**103**
Efficiency[2]		
Offense	41.9%	61
Defense	36.2%	18
Margin	**+5.7%**	**26**
Explosiveness[3]		
Offense	6.4	21
Defense	5.1	25
Margin	**+1.3**	**18**
Finishing Drives[4]		
Offense	5.0	21
Defense	3.8	18
Margin	**+1.2**	**12**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		
Projected	2.5	42
Actual	3	45
Margin	**+0.5**	**66**

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

36.2

Mike Elko's lone season as Notre Dame defensive coordinator reaped dividends. The Irish defense allowed a success rate of just 36.2 percent in 2017, 18th in FBS and 5.1 percentage points better than its 2016 output (41.3 percent, 70th). The bar is high for successor Clark Lea.

3.2

The Irish run game was all sorts of explosive in 2017. Notre Dame averaged 3.4 gains overall of 30-plus yards per game (sixth in FBS) and 3.2 rushes of 20-plus yards (third). Can the Irish bust dams like that without the help of Josh Adams?

0.523

Brian Kelly is 23-21 in one-possession games, a mundane 0.523 win percentage. He lost five of his first seven such games, then won 13 of 14. The Irish went 5–6 in their next 11 before a 1–9 stretch. But they've now won two in a row heading into 2018.

son-long challenge with Coney to pace the team in tackles. Junior Asmar Bilal is the favorite to win the Rover position. Sophomore Jonathan Jones is an inside linebacker option beyond Coney and Tranquill.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Every cornerback on the roster last year is back. That's good. Every safety on the team in '17 also is back, and that's not necessarily good. Julian Love has the earmarks of a two-year All-American at cornerback. Shaun Crawford will play somewhere, either at corner or nickel. Troy Pride Jr., who played more late in his sophomore season, should have the edge over Nick Watkins and junior Donte Vaughn. Things are much less settled at safety, a position that failed to snag a single interception on 445 pass attempts. Navy transfer Alohi Gilman, who was second on the Midshipmen in tackles as a true freshman, is now eligible and likely to man one starting spot. "Alohi is very athletic, has great instincts and can really play sideline to sideline," says safeties coach Terry Joseph. "Now we want him to go past the speed limit a little bit and be under control." Former cornerback Nick Coleman brings high-level skill and starting experience to safety and/or nickel. Jalen Elliott has starting experience — and tackling issues, as does fellow junior Devin Studstill. Sophomore Jordan Genmark Heath and freshmen Houston Griffith and Derrik Allen may be too talented to keep off the field.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Justin Yoon and punter Tyler Newsome — the latter a surprising captain choice — enter their fourth seasons as starters for the Irish. Yoon has been quietly very good with 42-of-52 field goal conversions. Newsome has a cannon, as evidenced by his 43.8-yard average in three seasons, although he's prone to some inconsistency. Notre Dame will be breaking in a new kick returner after C.J. Sanders, who handled most of those duties the last three seasons, decided to use his final year of eligibility as a graduate transfer. Finke, who averaged just 6.5 yards per his 24 punt returns, is sure-handed and elusive, although he seldom got help from his return unit. Finke doesn't need an upgrade; the blocking does.

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 9-3

Brian Kelly promised big changes after a disappointing 4–8 record in 2016, and the Fighting Irish responded by winning 10 games for the second time in three years. With the program seemingly on stable ground again, Kelly's biggest priority this offseason is replacing two standout linemen (Quenton Nelson and Mike McGlinchey) along with settling the QB battle. Even though the line will be retooled and running back Josh Adams left for the NFL, the ground attack should be the strength of the offense. Kelly opted for continuity when he promoted Clark Lea to replace Mike Elko as defensive coordinator. With nine starters back, Lea should build on the improvement this unit showed in 2017. Provided the Irish get solid play from the QB position, the schedule is manageable enough for the Irish to flirt with the 10-win mark again.

Postseason: TaxSlayer Bowl vs. Texas A&M

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

D-LINE DEVELOPMENT One year ago, the Irish had acute concerns with the productivity of their interior defensive line. Now, the tackle positions are near the top of Notre Dame's greatest assets. Jerry Tillery switched from nose tackle to three-technique to take advantage of his length. Jonathan Bonner, who uses his hands as weapons, moved to the nose. Backups Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa and Kurt Hinish progressed rapidly as true freshmen. Defensive tackle is a strength of the freshman class. "We continue to see development across the board," coach Brian Kelly says. "We're not a finished product, but I like where we are."

THE WORD IS ... COMPETITION When Notre Dame's bid for a national title evaporated in November, Brandon Wimbush's first season as starting quarterback took a nosedive, culminating with a benching during the Citrus Bowl. Backup Ian Book led the Irish to a comeback victory. "All competition is healthy, whether it's in the classroom, on the field or in life," Wimbush says. "Everywhere you go, you're going to have competition." Book says: "We have a healthy competition. It's really fun. Brandon would say the same thing. We push each other." Wimbush has more tools and likely will retain the job. But Kelly will be less likely to stick with Wimbush during trying times, knowing that Book can bail the Irish out.

IN DRUE WE TRUST Drue Tranquill played safety, tore each ACL in consecutive seasons, and moved to Rover, where he arguably was Notre Dame's most valuable defender in '17. Now he's playing inside linebacker. Transition? No sweat. "It's hard for our players to identify with Drue," says Kelly of the engineering graduate. "It's intimidating, like, 'How can I be like Drue? He does everything so well.' He does all the little things right. If you don't, he'll pick up the slack for you. That's strong leadership."

UP FROM THE ASHES With Nyles Morgan and Greer Martini the projected starters at inside linebacker heading into '17, there didn't appear to be room for Te'von Coney. "He was missing in action last spring," Kelly says. "We didn't know where he was." Coney eventually led the team in tackles (116) and tackles for a loss (13) despite starting just seven games. "Now, he's unmistakable on the field," Kelly says. "He continues his elevation as a marquee player on our defense."

Tom Lynn

2018 NOTRE DAME ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
12	Book, Ian	6-0/200	So.	El Dorado Hills, CA
14	Carney, J.D.	5-10/177	So.	San Diego, CA
3	Davis, Avery	5-11/203	Fr.	Cedar Hill, TX
17	Henry, Nolan	6-0/195	Sr.	Vancouver, WA
7	Wimbush, Brandon	6-2/225	Jr.	Teaneck, NJ

	RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
32	Assaf, Mick	5-11/207	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
18	Ekanayake, Cameron	6-0/194	So.	Niles, MI
6	Jones Jr., Tony	5-11/220	So.	St. Petersburg, FL
34	Smith, Jahmir	5-11/200	Fr.	Sanford, NC
2	Williams, Dexter	5-11/203	Sr.	Orlando, FL

	RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Armstrong, Jafar	6-1/213	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
81	Boykin, Miles	6-4/227	Jr.	Tinley Park, IL
11	Canteen, Freddy	6-0/192	Sr.	Elkton, MD
83	Claypool, Chase	6-4/229	Jr.	Abbotsford, BC
10	Finke, Chris	5-10/179	Jr.	Dayton, OH
80	Jones, Micah	6-5/208	Fr.	Gurnee, IL
88	McKinley, Javon	6-2/215	So.	Corona, CA
9	Pelini, Patrick	6-1/184	Fr.	Youngstown, OH
27	Shinaver, Arion	6-1/181	Jr.	Carmel, IN
87	Young, Michael	5-10/192	So.	Saint Rose, LA

	TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
49	Henige, Jack	6-5/233	So.	Hinsdale, IL
84	Kmet, Cole	6-6/255	So.	Lake Barrington, IL
48	Lezynski, Xavier	6-1/200	Fr.	Lawrenceville, NJ
86	Mack, Alizé	6-5/244	Jr.	Las Vegas, NV
85	Takacs, George	6-6/245	Fr.	Naples, FL
82	Weishar, Nic	6-5/245	Sr.	Midlothian, IL
89	Wright, Brock	6-5/250	So.	Cypress, TX

	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
69	Banks, Aaron	6-6/320	Fr.	Alameda, CA
71	Bars, Alex	6-6/318	Sr.	Nashville, TN
74	Eichenberg, Liam	6-6/303	So.	Cleveland, OH
76	Gibbons, Dillan	6-4/307	Fr.	Clearwater, FL
61	Grunhard, Colin	6-1/274	So.	Mission, KS
72	Hainsey, Robert	6-5/291	So.	Pittsburgh, PA
78	Kraemer, Tommy	6-6/315	So.	Cincinnati, OH
75	Lugg, Josh	6-7/308	Fr.	Wexford, PA
53	Mustipher, Sam	6-3/304	Sr.	Olney, MD
62	Plantz, Logan	6-2/280	Sr.	Frankfort, IL
57	Ruhland, Trevor	6-4/295	Jr.	Cary, IL

	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
55	Bonner, Jonathan	6-4/293	Sr.	Chesterfield, MO
97	Dew-Treadway, Micah	6-4/309	Jr.	Bolingbrook, IL
94	Ewell, Darnell	6-3/324	Fr.	Norfolk, VA
54	Feist, Lincoln	6-3/329	Sr.	Rapid City, SD
9	Hayes, Daelin	6-4/264	Jr.	Belleville, MI
93	Hayes, Jay	6-4/289	Sr.	Brooklyn, NY
41	Hinish, Kurt	6-2/292	So.	Pittsburgh, PA
49	Hutson, Brandon	6-3/243	Sr.	Battle Creek, MI
44	Jones, Jamir	6-3/242	Jr.	Rochester, NY
53	Kareem, Khalid	6-4/270	Jr.	Detroit, MI
91	Ogundeji, Adetokunbo	6-5/251	So.	West Bloomfield, MI
42	Okwara, Julian	6-5/230	Jr.	Charlotte, NC
95	Tagovailoa-Amosa, Myron	6-3/285	So.	Ewa Beach, HI
99	Tillery, Jerry	6-7/299	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
47	Wardlow, Kofi	6-2/240	Fr.	Washington, DC

	LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
35	Adams, David	6-1/222	Fr.	Pittsburgh, PA
52	Bauer, Bo	6-3/216	Fr.	Harborcreek, PA
22	Bilal, Asmar	6-2/225	Jr.	Indianapolis, IN
4	Coney, Te'von	6-1/238	Sr.	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
45	Jones, Jonathan	6-0/222	So.	Ocoee, FL
31	Lamb, Jack	6-4/216	Fr.	Temecula, CA
15	Morgan, D.J.	6-2/220	So.	Norwalk, CA
29	Oghoufo, Ovie	6-3/217	Fr.	Lathrup Village, MI
30	Owusu-Koramoah, Jeremiah	6-2/210	Fr.	Hampton, VA
37	Regan, Robert	6-2/212	Sr.	Darien, IL
17	Robertson, Isaiah	6-2/207	So.	Bolingbrook, IL
51	Spruell, Devyn	6-2/233	Sr.	Warren, NJ
46	Thompson, Jimmy	6-0/214	Sr.	Hinsdale, IL
23	Tranquill, Drue	6-2/233	Sr.	Fort Wayne, IN
40	White, Drew	6-0/225	Fr.	Boca Raton, FL

	DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
26	Agoro, Temitope	6-0/201	Jr.	Riverdale, MD
36	Ball, Brian	5-10/194	Sr.	Indianapolis, IN
24	Coleman, Nick	6-0/191	Sr.	Dayton, OH
20	Crawford, Shaun	5-9/178	Jr.	Lakewood, OH
21	Elliott, Jalen	6-1/203	Jr.	Richmond, VA
28	Fertitta, Nicco	5-9/171	Sr.	Las Vegas, NV
39	Garcia, Brandon	5-8/195	Jr.	Casa Grande, AZ
2	Genmark Heath, Jordan	6-1/211	So.	San Diego, CA
11	Gilman, Alohi	5-11/200	So.	Laie, HI
3	Griffith, Houston	6-0/196	Fr.	Chicago, IL
27	Love, Julian	5-11/189	Jr.	Westchester, IL
25	Mahoney, John	6-0/200	So.	West Des Moines, IA
5	Pride Jr., Troy	6-0/185	Jr.	Greer, SC
38	Schilling, Christopher	5-11/210	Jr.	Overland Park, KS
14	Studstill, Devin	6-0/198	Jr.	Riviera Beach, FL
8	Vaughn, Donte	6-3/205	Jr.	Memphis, TN
7	Watkins, Nick	6-1/205	Sr.	DeSoto, TX

	SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46	Bushland, Matt (LS)	6-2/210	Jr.	Dallas, TX
39	Doerer, Jonathan (K/P)	6-3/200	So.	Charlotte, NC
85	Newsome, Tyler (P)	6-3/210	Sr.	Carrollton, GA
42	Riney, Jeff (P)	5-11/189	Sr.	Katy, TX
54	Shannon, John (LS)	6-2/232	So.	Lake Forest, IL
19	Yoon, Justin (K)	5-10/194	Sr.	Nashville, TN

2018 SIGNEES

Jayson Ademilola	DL	6-3/288	Jackson, NJ
Justin Ademilola	DL	6-2/246	Jackson, NJ
Derrik Allen	DB	6-2/215	Marietta, GA
Kevin Austin	WR	6-2/197	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Bo Bauer	LB	6-2/212	Harborcreek, PA
Tariq Bracy	DB	5-11/170	Milpitas, CA
DJ Brown	DB	6-1/180	Annapolis, MD
Noah Boykin	DB	6-2/176	Washington, DC
John Dirksen	OL	6-5/303	Maria Stein, OH
C'Bo Flemister	RB	5-11/190	Williamson, GA
Ja-Mion Franklin	DL	6-1/296	Ridgely, MD
Houston Griffith	DB	6-0/194	Chicago, IL
Luke Jones	OL	6-5/289	Little Rock, AR
Micah Jones	WR	6-5/202	Gurnee, IL
Phil Jurkovec	QB	6-5/204	Pittsburgh, PA
Lawrence Keys III	WR	5-11/170	New Orleans, LA
Jack Lamb	LB	6-3/211	Temecula, CA
Braden Lenzy	WR	6-0/175	Tigard, OR
Cole Mabry	OL	6-5/275	Brentwood, TN
Paul Moala	DB	5-11/196	Mishawaka, IN
Ovie Oghoufo	LB	6-3/208	Lathrup Village, MI
Jarrett Patterson	OL	6-4/280	Laguna Hills, CA
Shayne Simon	LB	6-3/212	West Orange, NJ
Jahmir Smith	RB	5-10/198	Sanford, NC
George Takacs	TE	6-6/244	Naples, FL
Tommy Tremble	TE	6-3/224	Johns Creek, GA
Joe Wilkins Jr.	DB	6-2/180	N. Fort Myers, FL

In a class that was ranked 10th nationally by the 247Sports Composite, Notre Dame landed one of the top QBs in the country in 6'5" dual threat Phil Jurkovec. He'll have 6'2" Kevin Austin and speedy Braden Lenzy and Lawrence Keys III to target. The tight end options are strong with George Takacs and wideout-like Tommy Tremble. No area was helped more than the back end of the defense, where safeties Derrik Allen and Houston Griffith could play early. Noah Boykin, Tariq Bracy and Joe Wilkins add quickness and length at cornerback.

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3

Sept. 2	Temple	W	49-16
Sept. 9	Georgia	L	19-20
Sept. 16	at Boston College	W	49-20
Sept. 23	at Michigan State	W	38-18
Sept. 30	Miami (Ohio)	W	52-17
Oct. 7	at North Carolina	W	33-10
Oct. 21	USC	W	49-14
Oct. 28	NC State	W	35-14
Nov. 4	Wake Forest	W	48-37
Nov. 11	at Miami	L	8-41
Nov. 18	Navy	W	24-17
Nov. 25	at Stanford	L	20-38
Jan. 1	vs. LSU #	W	21-17

#Citrus Bowl



BRANDON WIMBUSH

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Brandon Wimbush	257	147	1,540	8	9

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Josh Adams	206	1,430	6.9	9
Brandon Wimbush	141	803	5.7	14
Deon McIntosh	65	368	5.7	5
Dexter Williams	39	360	9.2	4

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Equanimeous St. Brown	33	515	15.6	4
Chase Claypool	29	402	13.9	2
Kevin Stepherson	19	359	18.9	5
Alizé Mack	19	166	8.7	1
Durham Smythe	15	244	16.3	1

KICKING: Justin Yoon, 14-18 FGs, 55-55 PATs, 97 points

TACKLES: Te'von Coney, 116, Nyles Morgan, 92

SACKS: Jerry Tillery, 4.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Julian Love, 3

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	NATIONAL
Scoring	34.2 ppg	24
Rushing	269.3 ypg	7
Passing	178.9 ypg	103
Total	448.2 ypg	27
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	21.5 ppg	31
Rushing	154.5 ypg	51
Passing	214.7 ypg	53
Total	369.2 ypg	46
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	46

ATHLON SPORTS

WIN A CHANCE TO SEE YOUR FAVORITE TEAM



ATHLON SPORTS WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

VISIT
ATHLONSPORTS.COM/ATHLONFAN
AND GET LOUD!.

Prize will be awarded December 2018 and includes access to a regular season college or professional football game of choice. Prize excludes any event outside the continental United States, or any games in the pro football playoff, college football playoff, or any championship or bowl games. ARV $500.

One lucky reader will

WIN

access to the game of their choice in

2019

SEC PREVIEW





Table of Contents

Florida **GATORS** 134
Georgia **BULLDOGS** 140
Kentucky **WILDCATS** 146
Missouri **TIGERS** 152
South Carolina **GAMECOCKS** 158
Tennessee **VOLUNTEERS** 164
Vanderbilt **COMMODORES** 170
Alabama **CRIMSON TIDE** 176
Arkansas **RAZORBACKS** 182
Auburn **TIGERS** 188
LSU **TIGERS** 194
Mississippi State **BULLDOGS** 200
Ole Miss **REBELS** 206
Texas A&M **AGGIES** 212

Regional Teams

Cincinnati **BEARCATS** 219
Memphis **TIGERS** 220
Tulane **GREEN WAVE** 221
UCF **KNIGHTS** 222
USF **BULLS** 223
Florida Atlantic **OWLS** 225
FIU **PANTHERS** 226
Louisiana Tech **BULLDOGS** 227
Middle Tennessee **BLUE RAIDERS** 228
Southern Miss **GOLDEN EAGLES** 229
UAB **BLAZERS** 230
Western Kentucky **HILLTOPPERS** 231

Features

SEC Things to Watch 122
Alabama-Georgia: A 5-Year War 126
Jimbo Fisher's Biggest Challenge 128
Bayou Offensive 132

Alabama: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Georgia: Paul Abell

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

EAST

GEORGIA
BULLDOGS
12-1, 8-0 SEC



Schedule Notes: There's not much to worry about in non-conference action, but the Dawgs play at LSU and host Auburn from the SEC West. That's not easy.

FLORIDA
GATORS
8-4, 5-3 SEC



Schedule Notes: Dan Mullen's first two road games as the coach at Florida: at Tennessee (a job he reportedly sought) and at Mississippi State (his former school).

SOUTH CAROLINA
GAMECOCKS
7-5, 4-4 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Gamecocks' SEC West foes are manageable: Texas A&M at home and at Ole Miss. They close the season at Clemson.

WEST

ALABAMA
CRIMSON TIDE
13-0, 8-0 SEC



Schedule Notes: Alabama's final three SEC games figure to be their most challenging: at LSU and Mississippi State and Auburn at home.

AUBURN
TIGERS
10-2, 6-2 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Tigers play Pac-12 favorite Washington in Atlanta in Week 1 and don't play a road game until their Oct. 6 trip to Mississippi State.

MISSISSIPPI STATE
BULLDOGS
9-3, 5-3 SEC



Schedule Notes: Starkville will be at a fever pitch when Dan Mullen and Florida come to town on Sept. 29. The Bulldogs' trip to Kansas State will be intriguing.

Games to Watch

SEPT. 1
AUBURN VS. WASHINGTON
Auburn gets a great opportunity to set the tone in Week 1 against the Pac-12 favorite at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

SEPT. 2
MIAMI (FLA.) VS. LSU
The Tigers will have the nation's attention on Sunday night in prime time at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, against a very good Miami team.

SEPT. 15
LSU AT AUBURN
The first significant conference game of the season pits the two Tigers tangling at Jordan-Hare. The home team has won five straight in the series.

SEPT. 22
TEXAS A&M AT ALABAMA
Jimbo Fisher's debut as an SEC head coach will be memorable as the Aggies head to Tuscaloosa to take on Nick Saban and the Crimson Tide.

SEPT. 22
GEORGIA AT MISSOURI
Can Missouri emerge as a dark-horse contender in the SEC East? The Tigers will have a golden opportunity when Georgia visits CoMo.

OCT. 13
GEORGIA AT LSU
Matthew Stafford and Knowshon Moreno were leading the way the last time the Dawgs made the trip to Baton Rouge — in October 2008.

Fromm, Bentley, Paul Abell, Scarlett, Chandler, White, Montez: Tom DiPace; Lock, Snell: Tim Umphrey; Shurmur, Tagovailoa, Brown, Harris: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Stidham: Chris Covatta

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: ALABAMA over GEORGIA

MISSOURI
TIGERS
7-5, 3-5 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Tigers make their first-ever trip to Tuscaloosa in mid-October. Four of Missouri's final six are at home.

KENTUCKY
WILDCATS
6-6, 3-5 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Cats play at A&M and host Mississippi State in crossover games. They end with two non-conference games.

TENNESSEE
VOLUNTEERS
5-7, 2-6 SEC



Schedule Notes: A tough slate awaits Jeremy Pruitt. UT plays Auburn and Alabama from the West and opens with WVU in Charlotte.

VANDERBILT
COMMODORES
4-8, 1-7 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Dores visit Notre Dame on Sept. 15. Their two SEC West foes are our picks for sixth (Ole Miss) and seventh (Arkansas).

TEXAS A&M
AGGIES
8-4, 5-3 SEC



Schedule Notes: Jimbo Fisher plays a familiar foe in Week 2 when Clemson visits Kyle Field. A&M plays only three SEC home games.

LSU
TIGERS
7-5, 4-4 SEC



Schedule Notes: It's brutal. LSU opens with Miami (Fla.) in Arlington, Texas, and plays the two favorites from the East: Georgia and Florida.

OLE MISS
REBELS
5-7, 1-7 SEC



Schedule Notes: The Rebels play at Vanderbilt and host South Carolina from the East. They open against Texas Tech in Houston.

ARKANSAS
RAZORBACKS
5-7, 1-7 SEC



Schedule Notes: After a Sept. 22 game at Auburn, the Hogs won't play another true road game until Nov. 17 at Mississippi State.

OCT. 20
ALABAMA AT TENNESSEE
Jeremy Pruitt meets Nick Saban and the Tide for the first time as a head coach. The Vols have not scored more than 20 vs. Alabama since 2003.

OCT. 27
FLORIDA VS. GEORGIA
The Dan Mullen vs. Kirby Smart clashes over the next decade should be fun. Mullen, in Year 1 at Florida, has some catching up to do.

NOV. 3
ALABAMA AT LSU
Ed Orgeron won't win over many of his doubters until he finds a way to beat Alabama — something that the Tigers have not done since 2011.

NOV. 10
AUBURN AT GEORGIA
Auburn has averaged 6.8 points in its six losses and 41.5 points in its two wins in this series dating back to the 2011 season.

NOV. 22
MISSISSIPPI STATE AT OLE MISS
First-year Mississippi State boss Joe Moorhead gets his first taste of the Egg Bowl when the Bulldogs head to Oxford on Thanksgiving night.

NOV. 24
AUBURN AT ALABAMA
Auburn is seeking its first two-game winning streak vs. the hated Tide since Tommy Tuberville capped off his legendary six-game streak in 2007.

SEC Coordinator Carousel

Alabama: Offense
New: Josh Gattis, Mike Locksley
Old: Brian Daboll, Mike Locksley
Locksley will take over the play calling from Daboll, who left Alabama after one season to become the offensive coordinator with the Buffalo Bills. Locksley previously served as the OC at Maryland and Illinois. Gattis joins the staff after serving as a wide receivers coach for James Franklin for two years at Vanderbilt and four years at Penn State. He will coach Alabama's wide receivers and have the title of co-coordinator.

Alabama: Defense
New: Tosh Lupoi, Pete Golding
Old: Tosh Lupoi, Jeremy Pruitt
Pruitt left Alabama to become the head coach at Tennessee. Golding previously was the defensive coordinator at UTSA.

Arkansas: Offense
New: Joe Craddock
Old: Dan Enos
Craddock followed head coach Chad Morris from SMU, where he was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. Enos, a former quarterback and assistant coach at Michigan State, is now the quarterbacks coach at Alabama.

Arkansas: Defense
New: John Chavis
Old: Paul Rhoads
Chavis is now in his fourth stop as an SEC defensive coordinator, having coached at Tennessee, LSU and, most recently, Texas A&M. Rhoads is the defensive backs coach at UCLA.

Florida: Offense
New: Billy Gonzales, John Hevesy
Old: Doug Nussmeier
Gonzales and Hevesy followed new Florida head coach Dan Mullen from Mississippi State. Mullen will continue to call the offensive plays.

Florida: Defense
New: Todd Grantham
Old: Randy Shannon
Grantham made the move from Starkville to Gainesville with Dan Mullen. Shannon is the defensive coordinator at UCF under new coach Josh Heupel.

Georgia: Offense
New: Jim Chaney, James Coley
Old: Jim Chaney
Not much to see here. Coley, the wide receivers coach, added the co-coordinator title, but Chaney is still the play caller.

LSU: Offense
New: Steve Ensminger
Old: Matt Canada
Canada and LSU parted ways after one season. Ensminger, a former quarterback at LSU, was the Tigers' tight ends coach last year and previously served as the offensive coordinator at LSU (2016), Auburn (2008), Clemson (1997-98) and Texas A&M (1994-96).

Missouri: Offense
New: Derek Dooley
Old: Josh Heupel
Heupel left after two seasons in Columbia to become the head coach at UCF. Dooley is back in the college game for the first time since being fired as the head coach at Tennessee following the 2012 season. He has never been an offensive coordinator or quarterbacks coach at any level.

Missouri: Defense
New: Ryan Walters
Old: DeMontie Cross, Ryan Walters
Cross was dismissed two games into the 2017 season. Walters, who was the co-coordinator and safeties coach the past two years, was named as the sole defensive coordinator in December.

Mississippi State: Offense
New: Luke Getsy
Old: Billy Gonzales, John Hevesy
Getsy, a former quarterback at Akron, arrives in Starkville after a four-year stint with the Green Bay Packers, the last two as the team's wide receivers coach. Head coach Joe Moorhead will call the plays. Gonzales and Hevesy followed Dan Mullen to Florida.

Mississippi State: Defense
New: Bob Shoop
Old: Todd Grantham
Shoop was the defensive coordinator at Tennessee last season and previously worked for James Franklin at both Vanderbilt and Penn State. Grantham is the defensive coordinator at Florida.

South Carolina: Offense
New: Bryan McClendon
Old: Bryan McClendon, Kurt Roper
McClendon will be the Gamecocks' primary play caller after serving as the co-coordinator the past two seasons. He called the plays in South Carolina's bowl win over Michigan. Roper, who also worked for head coach Will Muschamp at Florida, was dismissed after the regular season. He is now the quarterbacks coach at Colorado.

2018 Unit Rankings

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
ALABAMA	1	1	3	1	2	1	5
ARKANSAS	12	7	8	12	11	7	9
AUBURN	3	8	6	10	1	2	4
FLORIDA	13	5	7	7	4	8	1
GEORGIA	5	2	5	2	5	4	2
KENTUCKY	14	6	13	8	12	6	8
LSU	11	12	11	6	6	5	3
MISSOURI	2	4	4	3	8	11	13
MISS. STATE	4	3	12	4	3	12	6
OLE MISS	8	14	1	5	13	14	12
SOUTH CAROLINA	6	10	2	9	9	9	10
TENNESSEE	10	11	9	13	10	10	11
TEXAS A&M	9	9	10	11	7	3	7
VANDERBILT	7	13	14	14	14	13	14

Tennessee: Offense
New: Tyson Helton
Old: Larry Scott
Helton was the quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator at USC the past two seasons. He previously was the offensive coordinator at Western Kentucky in 2014-15. Scott is now the tight ends coach at Florida.

Tennessee: Defense
New: Chris Rumph, Kevin Sherrer
Old: Bob Shoop
Sherrer was the outside linebackers coach at Georgia the past four seasons and previously served as the defensive coordinator at South Alabama in 2013. Rumph was the defensive line coach and co-coordinator at Florida in 2017. Shoop is now the defensive coordinator at Mississippi State.

Texas A&M: Offense
New: Darrell Dickey
Old: Noel Mazzone
Dickey, the head coach at North Texas from 1998-2006, was the offensive coordinator at Memphis from 2012-17. Mazzone is now the offensive coordinator at Arizona — the eighth different Power 5 school at which he has held that title.

Texas A&M: Defense
New: Mike Elko
Old: John Chavis
Elko was the defensive coordinator at Notre Dame in 2017. He previously was the DC at Wake Forest and Bowling Green. Chavis is now the defensive coordinator at Arkansas.

Vanderbilt: Defense
New: Jason Tarver
Old: Derek Mason
Mason, the head coach, is no longer the defensive coordinator. Tarver arrives after three seasons as the senior defensive assistant with the San Francisco 49ers and three years as the defensive coordinator with the Oakland Raiders. He previously worked with Derek Mason for one season at Stanford.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 Top Units

QUARTERBACKS Alabama
Nick Saban has a good problem on his hands. Alabama has two proven quarterbacks, but only one can start. Even though Jalen Hurts is 26–2 as a starter, sophomore Tua Tagovailoa is expected to win the job. Tagovailoa is the best pure passer of Saban's tenure in Tuscaloosa and performed well in limited action last season, including a second-half rally to beat Georgia in the CFB National Championship Game.

RUNNING BACKS Alabama
Saban and new play caller Mike Locksley have an embarrassment of riches in the backfield once again. Damien Harris turned down the NFL for one more year in Tuscaloosa. He's slated to be the feature back after rushing for 1,000 yards and 11 scores last fall. With Bo Scarbrough off to the NFL, Najee Harris will assume the No. 2 role after an impressive debut in 2017. Josh Jacobs and Brian Robinson would be No. 1 tailbacks at most other schools.



A.J. BROWN

RECEIVERS Ole Miss
Oxford was home to the SEC's top passing offense last season, and Ole Miss is likely to hold that honor once again. A.J. Brown might be the best receiver in college football after catching 75 passes for 1,252 yards and 11 scores last fall. DaMarkus Lodge (41 catches) and DK Metcalf (39) round out a talented trio of targets for quarterback Jordan Ta'amu. Tight end Dawson Knox could see a bigger role after 24 catches last fall.

OFFENSIVE LINE Alabama
The Crimson Tide hold a slight edge over Georgia for the SEC's No. 1 line in 2018. This unit returns four starters, including standout tackle Jonah Williams and Ross Pierschbacher, who is slated to move to center from guard. Lester Cotton and Matt Womack are back as full-time starters, but line coach Brent Key may shuffle the rest of this unit to find the best five. Alex Leatherwood and Jedrick Wills are two names to watch.

DEFENSIVE LINE Auburn
Standout edge rusher Jeff Holland will be missed, but the trenches are still stacked with talent for coordinator Kevin Steele. The strength is on the interior with Derrick Brown, Dontavius Russell and Andrew Williams. This trio was a big reason why opposing teams managed only 3.6 yards per carry against Auburn's defense. Junior Marlon Davidson and rising star Nick Coe will anchor the edge.

LINEBACKERS Alabama
Shaun Dion Hamilton and Rashaan Evans are gone, but Alabama's linebacker unit won't miss a beat. That's due to the development of Mack Wilson and Dylan Moses in the middle. Both players are poised for a breakout campaign in 2018. Anfernee Jennings, Terrell Lewis and Christian Miller all battled injuries last season but are expected to be at full strength by September. Saban is counting on this trio to be disruptive off the edge and to anchor a pass rush that registered 40 sacks last fall.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Florida
The Gators ranked ninth in the SEC in pass efficiency defense last year but expect marked improvement in 2018. New coordinator Todd Grantham inherits a pair of lockdown corners and All-SEC candidates in Marco Wilson and CJ Henderson. Chauncey Gardner-Johnson will shift to the nickel after recording 58 tackles and two interceptions last year. Jeawon Taylor and Brad Stewart are expected to start at safety.

Recruiting: Top 30 SEC Signees

1. **Justin Fields, Georgia**
 QB, 6-3, 221 Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)
2. **Eyabi Anoma, Alabama**
 DE, 6-5, 235 St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)
3. **Patrick Surtain Jr., Alabama**
 CB, 6-1, 199 American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
4. **Zamir White Georgia**
 RB, 6-1, 220 Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)
5. **Jamaree Salyer, Georgia**
 OG, 6-4, 342 Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)
6. **Tyson Campbell, Georgia**
 CB, 6-3, 180 American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
7. **Terrace Marshall, LSU**
 WR, 6-3, 192 Parkway (Bossier City, LA)
8. **Adam Anderson, Georgia**
 LB, 6-4, 214 Rome (Rome, GA)
9. **Cade Mays, Georgia**
 OT, 6-6, 318 Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)
10. **Brenton Cox, Georgia**
 DE, 6-5, 247 Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)
11. **Quay Walker, Georgia**
 LB, 6-4, 236 Crisp County (Cordele, GA)
12. **Jaylen Waddle, Alabama**
 WR, 5-10, 175 Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)
13. **James Cook, Georgia**
 RB, 6-0, 181 Northwestern (Miami, FL)
14. **Kelvin Joseph, LSU**
 S, 6-2, 191 Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)
15. **JJ Peterson, Tennessee**
 LB, 6-3, 231 Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)
16. **Joey Gatewood, Auburn**
 ATH, 6-4, 232 Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)
17. **Luke Ford, Georgia**
 TE, 6-6, 248 Carterville (Carterville, IL)
18. **Trey Hill, Georgia**
 OG, 6-4, 346 Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)
19. **Matt Corral, Ole Miss**
 QB, 6-2, 202 Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)
20. **Jacob Copeland, Florida**
 WR, 6-0, 192 Escambia (Pensacola, FL)
21. **Stephon Wynn, Alabama**
 DE, 6-4, 308 IMG Academy (Anderson, SC)
22. **Leon O'Neal Jr., Texas A&M**
 S, 6-1, 190 Cy Springs (Cypress, TX)
23. **Richard Gouraige, Florida**
 OT, 6-5, 271 Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)
24. **Ja'Marr Chase, LSU**
 WR, 6-1, 195 Archbishop Rummel (Metairie, LA)
25. **Emory Jones, Florida**
 QB, 6-3, 195 Heard County (Franklin, GA)
26. **Otis Reese, Georgia**
 LB, 6-4, 206, Lee County (Leesburg, GA)
27. **Justin Watkins, Florida**
 WR, 5-11, 172 East Ridge (Clermont, FL)
28. **Matthew Hill, Auburn**
 WR, 6-2, 185 Brookwood (Snellville, GA)
29. **Jalen Preston, Texas A&M**
 WR, 6-2, 212 Manvel (Manvel, TX)
30. **Channing Tindall, Georgia**
 LB, 6-2, 213 Spring Valley (Columbia, SC)


KYLE SHURMUR

SEC Returning Leaders

Passing	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT	AVG/G
Drew Lock, Missouri	419	242	57.8	3,964	44	13	304.9
Kyle Shurmur, Vanderbilt	380	220	57.9	2,823	26	10	235.3
Jarrett Stidham, Auburn	370	246	66.5	3,158	18	6	225.6

Rushing	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	LONG	AVG/G
Benny Snell Jr., Kentucky	262	1,333	5.1	19	71	102.5
Aeris Williams, Mississippi State	236	1,107	4.7	6	59	85.2
Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State	162	984	6.1	14	45	82.0

Receiving	REC	YDS	AVG	TD	LONG	AVG/G
A.J. Brown, Ole Miss	75	1,252	16.7	11	77	104.3
Emanuel Hall, Missouri	33	817	24.8	8	63	62.8
Bryan Edwards, South Carolina	64	793	12.4	5	41	61.0

Tackles: Devin White, LSU (133); De'Jon Harris, Arkansas (115)

Sacks: Montez Sweat, Mississippi State (10.5); Landis Durham, Texas A&M (10.5)

Interceptions: Mark McLaurin, Mississippi State (6); Andraez Williams, LSU (6)

2017 SEC Standings

EAST	SEC	OVERALL	WEST	SEC	OVERALL
Georgia	7-1	13-2	Auburn	7-1	10-4
South Carolina	5-3	9-4	Alabama	7-1	13-1
Kentucky	4-4	7-6	LSU	6-2	9-4
Missouri	4-4	7-6	Mississippi State	4-4	9-4
Florida	3-5	4-7	Texas A&M	4-4	7-6
Vanderbilt	1-7	5-7	Ole Miss	3-5	6-6
Tennessee	0-8	4-8	Arkansas	1-7	4-8

2017 Bowl Results

Texas Bowl: Texas 33, Missouri 16

Belk Bowl: Wake Forest 55, Texas A&M 52

Music City Bowl: Northwestern 24, Kentucky 23

TaxSlayer Bowl: Mississippi State 31, Louisville 27

Outback Bowl: South Carolina 26, Michigan 19

Peach Bowl: UCF 34, Auburn 27

Citrus Bowl: Notre Dame 21, LSU 17

Rose Bowl (CFP Semifinal): Georgia 54, Oklahoma 48 (2OT)

Sugar Bowl (CFP Semifinal): Alabama 24, Clemson 6

CFP National Championship Game: Alabama 26, Georgia 23 (OT)

2017 SEC TEAM STATS & RANKINGS

OFFENSE

	SCORING	RUSH	PASS	TOTAL
ALABAMA	37.1 (2)	250.6 (3)	193.4 (9)	444.1 (4)
ARKANSAS	28.8 (8)	168.0 (7)	205.4 (7)	373.4 (9)
AUBURN	33.9 (4)	218.3 (4)	233.4 (5)	451.6 (3)
FLORIDA	22.1 (13)	156.4 (9)	179.5 (11)	335.9 (13)
GEORGIA	35.4 (3)	258.4 (1)	176.9 (12)	435.3 (5)
KENTUCKY	25.5 (10)	161.7 (8)	188.2 (10)	349.8 (11)
LSU	27.2 (9)	207.6 (5)	203.5 (8)	411.1 (7)
MISSISSIPPI STATE	32.0 (7)	251.7 (2)	166.9 (14)	418.6 (6)
MISSOURI	37.5 (1)	193.5 (6)	308.6 (2)	502.2 (1)
OLE MISS	32.8 (5)	133.9 (11)	328.4 (1)	462.3 (2)
SOUTH CAROLINA	24.2 (12)	122.2 (12)	214.9 (6)	337.1 (12)
TENNESSEE	19.8 (14)	117.4 (13)	173.7 (13)	291.1 (14)
TEXAS A&M	32.7 (6)	155.6 (10)	251.2 (3)	406.8 (8)
VANDERBILT	24.6 (11)	107.2 (14)	243.6 (4)	350.8 (10)

DEFENSE

	SCORING	RUSH	PASS	TOTAL
ALABAMA	11.9 (1)	94.7 (1)	165.7 (2)	260.4 (1)
ARKANSAS	36.2 (14)	196.1 (11)	242.2 (12)	438.3 (13)
AUBURN	18.5 (3)	137.0 (5)	182.4 (5)	319.4 (5)
FLORIDA	27.3 (7)	153.9 (7)	195.4 (8)	349.3 (6)
GEORGIA	16.4 (2)	126.0 (2)	168.9 (3)	294.9 (2)
KENTUCKY	28.2 (8)	175.3 (10)	251.6 (13)	426.9 (12)
LSU	18.9 (4)	128.4 (3)	187.6 (6)	316.0 (4)
MISSISSIPPI STATE	20.9 (6)	131.6 (4)	174.7 (4)	306.3 (3)
MISSOURI	31.8 (12)	159.6 (8)	254.5 (14)	414.1 (11)
OLE MISS	34.6 (13)	245.3 (13)	214.2 (9)	459.5 (14)
SOUTH CAROLINA	20.7 (5)	141.1 (6)	226.0 (10)	367.1 (7)
TENNESSEE	29.1 (9)	251.3 (14)	161.7 (1)	412.9 (10)
TEXAS A&M	30.7 (10)	170.9 (9)	237.6 (11)	408.5 (9)
VANDERBILT	31.3 (11)	198.5 (12)	194.6 (7)	393.1 (8)

ALL-SEC TEAM

First-Team Offense

QB	**Tua Tagovailoa**	6-1	218	So.	Alabama
RB	**Damien Harris**	5-11	213	Sr.	Alabama
RB	**Benny Snell**	5-11	223	Jr.	Kentucky
AP	**D'Andre Swift**	5-9	215	So.	Georgia
WR	**A.J. Brown**	6-1	225	Jr.	Ole Miss
WR	**Deebo Samuel**	6-0	210	Sr.	South Carolina
TE	**Albert Okwuegbunam**	6-5	260	So.	Missouri
C	**Ross Pierschbacher**	6-4	301	Sr.	Alabama
OL	**Greg Little**	6-6	325	Jr.	Ole Miss
OL	**Trey Smith**	6-6	320	So.	Tennessee
OL	**Andrew Thomas**	6-5	320	So.	Georgia
OL	**Jonah Williams**	6-5	301	Jr.	Alabama


ROSS PIERSCHBACHER


J.R. REED

First-Team Defense

DL	**Terry Beckner**	6-4	305	Sr.	Missouri
DL	**Raekwon Davis**	6-7	308	Jr.	Alabama
DL	**Jeffery Simmons**	6-4	300	Jr.	Mississippi State
DL	**Montez Sweat**	6-6	245	Sr.	Mississippi State
LB	**De'Jon Harris**	6-0	239	Jr.	Arkansas
LB	**Devin White**	6-1	240	Jr.	LSU
LB	**Mack Wilson**	6-2	237	Jr.	Alabama
CB	**Deandre Baker**	5-11	185	Sr.	Georgia
CB	**Andraez Williams**	6-2	182	Jr.	LSU
S	**Mike Edwards**	6-0	201	Sr.	Kentucky
S	**J.R. Reed**	6-1	194	Jr.	Georgia

First-Team Specialists

K	**Rodrigo Blankenship**	6-1	191	Jr.	Georgia
P	**Corey Fatony**	5-11	205	Sr.	Missouri
KR	**Deebo Samuel**	6-0	210	Sr.	South Carolina
P	**Mecole Hardman**	5-11	183	Jr.	Georgia

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Drew Lock**	6-4	225	Sr.	Missouri
RB	**Aeris Williams**	6-1	220	Sr.	Mississippi State
RB	**Trayveon Williams**	5-9	200	Jr.	Texas A&M
AP	**Kadarius Toney**	5-11	194	So.	Florida
WR	**Ryan Davis**	5-9	175	Sr.	Auburn
WR	**Jerry Jeudy**	6-1	187	So.	Alabama
TE	**C.J. Conrad**	6-5	252	Sr.	Kentucky
C	**Lamont Gaillard**	6-2	308	Sr.	Georgia
OL	**Paul Adams**	6-6	315	Sr.	Missouri
OL	**Zack Bailey**	6-6	309	Sr.	South Carolina
OL	**Martez Ivey**	6-5	315	Sr.	Florida
OL	**Darryl Williams**	6-2	305	Jr.	Mississippi State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**McTelvin Agim**	6-3	280	Jr.	Arkansas
DL	**Derrick Brown**	6-5	316	Jr.	Auburn
DL	**Landis Durham**	6-3	255	Sr.	Texas A&M
DL	**Cece Jefferson**	6-1	242	Sr.	Florida
LB	**T.J. Brunson**	6-1	225	Jr.	South Carolina
LB	**Deshaun Davis**	5-11	246	Sr.	Auburn
LB	**Tyrel Dodson**	6-2	242	Jr.	Texas A&M
CB	**Jamel Dean**	6-2	215	Jr.	Auburn
CB	**Marco Wilson**	6-0	177	So.	Florida
S	**Chauncey Gardner**	6-0	207	Jr.	Florida
S	**Mark McLaurin**	6-2	215	Sr.	Mississippi State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Daniel LaCamera**	6-4	230	Sr.	Texas A&M
P	**Joseph Charlton**	6-5	187	Jr.	South Carolina
KR	**De'Vion Warren**	5-10	179	So.	Arkansas
PR	**Richaud Floyd**	5-11	190	Jr.	Missouri


Drew Lock
Missouri


Jarrett Stidham
Auburn


McTelvin Agim
Arkansas


Mecole Hardman
Georgia

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

QB	**Jarrett Stidham**	6-3	214	Jr.	Auburn
RB	**Damarea Crockett**	5-11	225	Jr.	Missouri
RB	**Jordan Scarlett**	5-11	206	Jr.	Florida
AP	**Lynn Bowden**	6-1	195	So.	Kentucky
WR	**Terry Godwin**	5-11	185	Sr.	Georgia
WR	**Emanuel Hall**	6-3	200	Sr.	Missouri
TE	**Isaac Nauta**	6-4	240	Jr.	Georgia
C	**Erik McCoy**	6-4	315	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	**Garrett Brumfield**	6-3	299	Sr.	LSU
OL	**Hjalte Froholdt**	6-5	315	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	**Bruno Reagan**	6-3	315	Sr.	Vanderbilt
OL	**Bunchy Stallings**	6-3	305	Sr.	Kentucky

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

DL	**Tyler Clark**	6-4	300	Jr.	Georgia
DL	**Javon Kinlaw**	6-6	302	Jr.	South Carolina
DL	**Rashard Lawrence**	6-3	300	Jr.	LSU
DL	**D.J. Wonnum**	6-5	258	Jr.	South Carolina
LB	**Josh Allen**	6-5	252	Sr.	Kentucky
LB	**Terez Hall**	6-2	230	Sr.	Missouri
LB	**Natrez Patrick**	6-3	242	Sr.	Georgia
CB	**CJ Henderson**	6-1	186	So.	Florida
CB	**Joejuan Williams**	6-3	208	Jr.	Vanderbilt
S	**Santos Ramirez**	6-2	195	Sr.	Arkansas
S	**Nigel Warrior**	6-0	194	Jr.	Tennessee

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

K	**Tucker McCann**	6-0	205	Jr.	Missouri
P	**Tommy Townsend**	6-1	175	Jr.	Florida
KR	**Mecole Hardman**	5-11	183	Jr.	Georgia
PR	**Trevon Diggs**	6-2	195	Jr.	Alabama

Shurmur, Pierschbacher, Stidham, Agim, Hardman: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Locke: Tim Umphrey; Reed: Paul Abell

Advanced Stats: The 5 Factors

In this publication, you'll find a series of references to what we call the Five Factors. They are interrelated and are more descriptive than prescriptive — you can't simply say, "We need to improve on turnovers" and make it so — but they are wonderfully useful in examining what went right or wrong for a team in the previous season. So what's the best way to look at these factors? Some are more simple and direct than others.

Field Position: Simply looking at a team's (and its opponent's) average starting field position is a clean way of determining how a team leveraged the field in its favor. A team can create an advantage (or disadvantage) through numerous means — good kicking or punting, good returns, turnovers, avoiding three-and-outs (and creating plenty for the opponent) — but average starting field position is the easiest way to measure the result.

Efficiency: Success Rate is an on-base percentage for football; it creates a definition of success for every play — 50 percent of necessary yardage on first down, 70 percent on second down, 100 percent on third or fourth down — and, over time, gives you a clean, easy look at how well a team stays on schedule and ahead of the chains. Explosiveness, your ability to create big plays and easy scores, is often seen as the most important factor in football, but you still have only three to four plays to gain 10 yards, and Success Rate tells you almost everything you need to know about how teams perform in that regard.

Explosiveness: In a pinch, Yards Per Play will suffice just fine when it comes to gauging explosiveness. From an advanced level, there are other options. PPP measures the equivalent point value of every play by assigning a point value to every yard line (based on the net points an offense is expected to generate from yard to yard). Isolated PPP looks at the point value of a team's successful plays (as determined by the Success Rate equation above). With IsoPPP, you can boil offense down to two questions: How often were you successful? And when you were successful, how successful were you?

Finishing Drives: Throughout this publication, we'll look at one simple measure to judge the ability to finish drives: points per trip inside the opponent's 40. There is more separation between good and bad teams if you stretch the "scoring opportunity" definition to the 40, but you can get a good feel for drive-finishing ability by looking at the typical red zone definition, too. WARNING: Avoid "red zone scoring percentage" averages. Over time, there is an enormous difference between scoring a touchdown and settling for a field goal, and "scoring percentage" treats them the same. Aim more toward touchdown percentages or the superior "points per trip."

Turnovers: You can certainly look at turnover margin to roughly gauge the impact of turnovers. You can also look into the field position and points immediately created by those turnovers if you want to get a little bit more accurate. To aim at both the effect and randomness of turnovers, you will find a comparison of actual numbers and "projected" turnovers based on what a team's turnover margin would have been with an average number of fumble recoveries (50 percent on average, obviously) and interceptions (a team normally averages one interception for every four pass break-ups). That will give you an idea for both who committed and forced the most and who was particularly lucky or unlucky regarding the bouncing of the pointy ball.

1 Field Position

Team	OffAvgFP	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	DefAvgRate	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	FP Margin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk
ALABAMA	33.9	3	1	25.1	2	1	8.8	2	1
ARKANSAS	29.2	84	10	30.2	86	12	-1.0	80	10
AUBURN	28.7	91	11	29.8	73	11	-1.1	82	11
FLORIDA	28.1	105	13	30.4	90	13	-2.3	104	14
GEORGIA	31.5	25	2	27.9	25	3	3.6	24	3
KENTUCKY	30.6	37	5	27.9	26	4	2.7	33	4
LSU	30.9	33	4	26.1	8	2	4.8	14	2
MISSISSIPPI STATE	31.1	31	3	28.5	42	6	2.6	36	5
MISSOURI	27.9	109	14	29.3	60	8	-1.4	90	12
OLE MISS	29.7	65	8	29.2	58	7	0.5	58	7
SOUTH CAROLINA	30.2	50	6	28.4	38	5	1.8	44	6
TENNESSEE	29.8	62	7	29.4	63	10	0.4	60	8
TEXAS A&M	29.6	72	9	29.3	61	9	0.3	61	9
VANDERBILT	28.3	103	12	30.5	94	14	-2.2	101	13

2 Efficiency

Team	OffSuccessRate	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	DefSuccessRate	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	SuccessRate Margin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk
ALABAMA	45.8%	17	2	33.7%	7	2	12.1%	5	1
ARKANSAS	43.2%	48	8	46.7%	116	14	-3.5%	95	12
AUBURN	44.2%	41	7	33.5%	5	1	10.7%	9	2
FLORIDA	37.8%	113	14	37.6%	27	5	0.2%	68	10
GEORGIA	45.4%	22	6	35.6%	13	4	9.8%	12	4
KENTUCKY	42.1%	59	10	46.2%	110	12	-4.1%	101	13
LSU	46.1%	15	1	38.2%	33	6	7.9%	17	5
MISSISSIPPI STATE	45.5%	20	4	35.6%	12	3	9.9%	10	3
MISSOURI	45.6%	19	3	40.2%	58	7	5.4%	27	6
OLE MISS	45.5%	21	5	43.3%	87	11	2.2%	54	7
SOUTH CAROLINA	41.8%	64	11	40.4%	60	8	1.4%	63	9
TENNESSEE	39.1%	101	12	46.7%	115	13	-7.6%	115	14
TEXAS A&M	38.5%	107	13	40.7%	63	9	-2.2%	86	11
VANDERBILT	43.0%	51	9	41.1%	66	10	1.9%	58	8

3 Explosiveness

Team	OffYds/Play	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	DefYds/Play	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	Yds/PlayMargin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk
ALABAMA	6.6	13	4	4.0	1	1	2.6	1	1
ARKANSAS	5.6	67	8	6.5	116	14	-0.9	105	13
AUBURN	6.2	33	6	4.7	8	2	1.5	14	4
FLORIDA	5.2	100	13	5.7	73	9	-0.5	93	11
GEORGIA	6.7	12	3	4.7	10	3	2.0	4	2
KENTUCKY	5.6	70	9	6.2	105	13	-0.6	101	12
LSU	6.2	32	5	5.1	28	4	1.1	24	5
MISSISSIPPI STATE	5.5	79	11	5.2	40	6	0.3	56	8
MISSOURI	7.1	6	1	5.6	63	7	1.5	13	3
OLE MISS	6.9	9	2	6.2	99	12	0.7	35	6
SOUTH CAROLINA	5.5	86	12	5.2	35	5	0.3	54	7
TENNESSEE	4.8	120	14	5.9	87	11	-1.1	116	14
TEXAS A&M	5.5	75	10	5.6	68	8	-0.1	75	9
VANDERBILT	5.6	66	7	5.9	83	10	-0.3	81	10

4 Finishing Drives

Team	OffPtsPerOpp	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	DefPtsPerOpp	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	PtsPerOpp Margin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk
ALABAMA	4.8	33	6	3.4	4	2	1.4	4	1
ARKANSAS	4.8	37	7	5.1	119	13	-0.3	96	13
AUBURN	4.6	56	9	3.3	3	1	1.3	7	2
FLORIDA	4.6	49	8	4.2	42	5	0.4	37	5
GEORGIA	5.3	6	1	4.1	32	4	1.2	11	3
KENTUCKY	4.3	80	11	4.5	76	8	-0.2	85	12
LSU	4.1	96	13	4.2	43	6	-0.1	80	11
MISSISSIPPI STATE	4.4	72	10	4.4	62	7	0.0	73	10
MISSOURI	5.1	11	2	4.6	85	9	0.5	31	4
OLE MISS	4.9	25	4	4.6	86	10	0.3	49	7
SOUTH CAROLINA	4.2	93	12	3.9	24	3	0.3	53	8
TENNESSEE	3.9	114	14	5.3	126	14	-1.4	127	14
TEXAS A&M	4.8	32	5	4.7	90	11	0.1	62	9
VANDERBILT	5.1	12	3	4.8	99	12	0.3	43	6

5 Turnovers

Team	TO Margin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	Projected TO Margin	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk	Difference	Nat-Rk	SEC-Rk
ALABAMA	14.0	5	1	6.6	16	3	7.4	12	1
ARKANSAS	-1.0	71	7	-0.1	67	8	-0.9	77	10
AUBURN	-1.0	71	7	6.1	18	4	-7.1	116	14
FLORIDA	-3.0	85	10	-5.2	112	14	2.2	42	4
GEORGIA	4.0	37	4	2.9	37	5	1.1	57	6
KENTUCKY	3.0	45	5	0.8	56	7	2.2	44	5
LSU	10.0	15	3	10.0	3	1	0.0	72	7
MISSISSIPPI STATE	-1.0	71	7	2.7	38	6	-3.7	103	12
MISSOURI	-8.0	111	14	-1.9	86	11	-6.1	112	13
OLE MISS	-5.0	97	12	-4.7	105	13	-0.3	73	8
SOUTH CAROLINA	11.0	13	2	7.2	12	2	3.8	30	2
TENNESSEE	-3.0	85	10	-0.6	75	10	-2.4	91	11
TEXAS A&M	3.0	45	5	-0.6	74	9	3.6	32	3
VANDERBILT	-5.0	97	12	-4.4	102	12	-0.6	76	9

SEC Things to Watch

By Matt Hinton



1 Year of the Quarterbacks *(for real this time)*

Last season wasn't exactly a renaissance year for SEC quarterbacks, but it may have set the stage for one: All but two of the league's 14 teams return familiar faces behind center, a handful of whom could be on the cusp of legitimate national stardom. As a group, they shape up as the SEC's deepest, most promising cast of signal callers in years.

Statistically, the cream of the returning crop is Missouri's Drew Lock, who finished as the SEC leader in passing yards, yards per attempt, touchdowns and efficiency en route to a first-team all-conference nod from league coaches; as a senior, he's arguably the most NFL-ready passer in the country. If any other QB deserves to share that distinction, it's Auburn's Jarrett Stidham, a blue-chip journeyman who was brought on last winter to revive the Tigers' dormant downfield passing game and largely lived up to the hype. And by the end of the season, it's entirely possible that the title will belong to Georgia's sophomore phenom, Jake Fromm, owner of a 12–2 record as a starter. Fromm's debut ranked among the best ever by a true freshman quarterback, and whatever doubts existed about his potential were answered by his high-stakes postseason performances in the SEC Championship Game, Rose Bowl and National Championship Game.

So, too, of course, is the stock of the league's other sophomore phenom, Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa, whose triumphant turn opposite Fromm in the national title game will go down as one of the most dramatic moments in the sport's history — partly because of the implications for Bama's incumbent starter, Jalen Hurts, whose poise in the face of his abrupt demotion was overshadowed by the obvious doubts it raised about his role going forward. Whichever one of them emerges atop the depth chart, the "game manager" stereotype that usually defines Crimson Tide QBs is null and void.

Beyond the headliners, there's also proven production at Mississippi State, where senior Nick Fitzgerald is expected to be back at full speed following an ugly ankle injury in last year's Egg Bowl; at South Carolina, where future pro Jake Bentley boasts far more impressive physical tools than his mediocre sophomore numbers indicated; at Ole Miss, where former junior college transfer Jordan Ta'amu ended the season on a tear in place of the since-departed Shea Patterson; and at Vanderbilt, where senior Kyle Shurmur accounted for a higher share of his team's total offense last year (66.6 percent) than any other player in the SEC. Texas A&M saw flashes of potential from freshmen Nick Starkel (redshirt) and Kellen Mond (true), who'll continue to battle for the job as sophomores. Even Tennessee, which hit rock bottom in 2017, has reason for optimism after landing one of the most sought-after graduate transfers on the offseason market, Keller Chryst, a former blue-chip recruit who logged 13 career starts at Stanford. Chryst will compete with the incumbent, sophomore Jarrett Guarantano, under the implicit guarantee that there's nowhere to go but up.

Bentley: Chris Keane; Fitzgerald: Paul Abell; Stidham: Chris Covatta; Fromm, Shurmur, Ta'amu: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2 Tua Takes the Reins



Try to imagine another set of circumstances, short of injury, in which Alabama's looming quarterback controversy even makes sense. On paper, the résumés are about as lopsided as they can be: One candidate is a proven, decorated veteran with a 26–2 record as a starter over two years, both of which culminated in a trip to the national title game; the other, a true sophomore with zero career starts and virtually no relevant experience prior to coming off the bench at halftime of the national title game. Heck, for that matter, try to imagine another set of circumstances in which the second guy even gets on the field in that situation to begin with.

Still, by the time the confetti began to fall after Bama's wild, come-from-behind victory over Georgia, it seemed clear that the future belonged to the second guy, Tagovailoa — so clear, in fact, that the big question entering spring practice wasn't so much whether Jalen Hurts could wrest the starting job back from the Hawaiian upstart as it was whether the offense could somehow accommodate them both.

Nick Saban himself assured reporters that a time-share situation was "not out of the question," and Hurts' team-first response to watching his understudy carry the Tide across the finish line indicated that he might be open to a reduced role. With the season on the line, though, it was Tagovailoa who validated Saban's trust on the biggest stage, and his arm strength immediately added a downfield dimension to the offense that had been sorely missing. If Hurts is intent on remaining a starter, he'll likely have to pursue that opportunity somewhere else.



3 *Lock Goes Out in Style*

It has never taken a highly trained eye to see that Drew Lock — a 6'4", 225-pound pocket passer straight from central casting, whose father and grandfather both played football at Mizzou — was born to throw passes for the Tigers. But it hasn't always been obvious that his enormous potential would eventually be fulfilled.

As a freshman, in 2015, Lock was thrown into the fire after the incumbent starter, Maty Mauk, was suspended from the team; the same season, most of the locker room threatened to boycott a game amid broader campus tensions, and the longtime head coach, Gary Pinkel, announced his retirement following a cancer diagnosis. Lock, predictably, finished at the bottom of the conference in almost every statistical category. His progress as a sophomore was spotty at best, and Mizzou limped to another losing campaign.

Year 3 got off to a similar start: By mid-October, the Tigers were 1–5, patience with coach Barry Odom was beginning to run thin, and Lock was in danger of being written off as an outright bust. But the second half of the season was a revelation. As a team, Missouri reeled off six straight wins to secure a winning record, scoring at least 45 points in all six; individually, Lock finished with multiple touchdown passes in nine consecutive games, a single-season SEC record. He led the nation in TD passes (44) and passes that gained at least 50 yards (19), edging Heisman winner Baker Mayfield in both categories. Scouts noticed.

There's still plenty left for Lock to prove as a senior, especially against the top half of the schedule. Mizzou ended up 0–6 against teams that finished with winning records, averaging just 18.0 points per game in the losses. Lock's leading receiver each of the past three seasons, J'Mon Moore, is gone. Still, Lock will start out at or near the top of 2019 NFL Draft boards, and if everything comes together, he has a good chance of finishing there, too.

4 **Moorhead** Makes His Move?



Five of the league's 14 teams will be under new management in 2018 — six if you count Ole Miss' Matt Luke, now the full-time boss in Oxford following a season-long audition in an interim role — and most of the new coaches arrived in their new jobs with a proven track record and an over-the-top salary to match. But of all the new hires, the highest expectations in Year 1 may belong to the one who'll be making the least: Mississippi State's Joe Moorhead, whose four-year, $11 million contract pales in comparison to the rest of his West Division peers, but who'll inherit a roster built to pay off immediately.

Part of the optimism in Starkville stems from Moorhead's own track record, first as the head coach at Fordham, where he molded a last-place outfit into a perennial FCS playoff team, and more recently at Penn State, where he helped turn the notoriously stale Nittany Lions offense into a versatile, explosive attack that averaged nearly 40 points per game over the past two seasons. But he'll also benefit enormously from the work of his predecessor, Dan Mullen, who left a vastly more stable and competitive program than the one he took over in 2009.

Much is riding on quarterback Nick Fitzgerald, the centerpiece of the offense the past two seasons, and his surgically repaired right ankle. And, of course, the Bulldogs' ceiling is limited as always by the fact that they share a division with Alabama, Auburn and LSU. Except for the coaching staff, though, the roster is essentially an older version of the same one that beat LSU early, Louisville late, and pushed Alabama to the brink en route to a 9–4 finish.

5 Florida Resets on Offense *(Again)*



The last time Florida fielded a truly elite offense, Dan Mullen was the offensive coordinator, Tim Tebow was the quarterback and George W. Bush was the president. The year: 2008, when UF led a defensively driven league in both yards and points per game en route to a national title. In the decade since, the Gators' offensive malaise has seemed to grow deeper, darker and more intractable by the season.

Given his track record, it's a safe bet that Mullen — whose protégés include Tebow, Dak Prescott and Alex Smith, among others — will eventually reverse that trend. Eventually. For the time being, though, he's largely stuck with the same cast that averaged a paltry 21 points last year vs. SEC opponents, worst in the conference outside of the shipwreck at Tennessee. More to the point, he's stuck with an incumbent quarterback, Feleipe Franks, who struggled early and often as a redshirt freshman.

The big question facing Mullen is whether Franks warrants another year of growing pains in a new system. Franks was a touted prospect, but the same can be said for the top-rated player in the incoming class, Emory Jones, who defected from Ohio State, enrolled early, and projects as a better fit in Mullen's spread-to-run scheme. A late-arriving graduate transfer isn't out of the question, either. Whoever winds up behind center, satisfying the expectations of a notoriously impatient fan base will be an uphill battle.

6 Georgia Resets on Defense



Georgia's 2017 defense was a deep, veteran outfit that ranked among the stingiest units in the nation in terms of both yards and points allowed. Inevitably, it was also decimated by attrition: Outgoing regulars from last year's title run include a pair of behemoth anchors on the interior (John Atkins and Trent Thompson), a pair of bookend pass rushers (Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy), a trio of versatile, multi-year starters in the secondary (Aaron Davis, Malkom Parrish and Dominick Sanders) and — most important — the heart of the unit, heat-seeking linebacker Roquan Smith, the most decorated defensive player in the country.

That's nothing new for Kirby Smart, who, as Nick Saban's defensive coordinator, spent most of the past decade managing the annual exodus from Alabama's top-ranked defense. And the cupboard isn't exactly bare — the Bulldogs will still have a steady veteran presence in the trenches (Jonathan Ledbetter and **Tyler Clark**), off the edge (D'Andre Walker) and in the secondary (Deandre Baker and J.R. Reed). Even the glaring vacancy at middle linebacker could be in reliable hands if senior Natrez Patrick works his way back into good standing. But for the first time, Smart will have to lean heavily on his own recruits, and with expectations dialed to eleven, a learning curve is a luxury he can't afford.

Moorhead, Mullen: AP; Clark: Paul Abell; Samuel: Chris Keane; Saban: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



7 Garnet & Black on the Attack

Pound for pound, there wasn't a more explosive player in college football in 2017 than South Carolina's **Deebo Samuel**: Before he suffered a broken leg in Week 3, Samuel scored six touchdowns — three receiving, one rushing, two in the return game — on just 19 touches, all but one of the scores coming from at least 25 yards out. No other Carolina skill player accounted for more than five TDs all season, from any distance, and the offense never fully recovered from Samuel's absence.

The silver lining for 2018: Because the injury happened early in the season, Samuel was able to exercise a medical redshirt that will bring him back for a fifth year at full speed. It also allowed the Gamecocks' younger receivers to establish a foothold in the offense that could pay big dividends. The primary target in Samuel's absence, Bryan Edwards, will enter his junior campaign among the active SEC leaders in both receptions (108) and yards (1,383). Between Samuels, Edwards and rising sophomores Shi Smith and OrTre Smith, South Carolina's receiving corps has the talent and experience to rival the blue-chip unit at Ole Miss as the league's best. Throw in the backfield rotation of A.J. Turner, Ty'Son Williams, Rico Dowdle and Mon Denson, and in all Carolina returns 86.6 percent of last year's total offensive production, second in the conference only to Mississippi State.

There are lingering questions about the growth curve of junior QB Jake Bentley, whose production stagnated in 2017 despite his obvious talent. And coach Will Muschamp has never been known for fostering explosive offenses. Still, if the Gamecocks offense continues to linger at the bottom of the league statistically, the supporting cast certainly won't be an excuse.



8 Saban Shoots for SEVEN

The offseason headlines in Alabama revolved around attrition and uncertainty. The immediate concerns for the new year included replacing both the offensive and defensive coordinators from the latest title run as well as more than a dozen outgoing starters — one of whom, potentially, could turn out to be a star quarterback in the wake of the first true, full-blown QB controversy of the Nick Saban era. For the first time in ages, Bama wasn't in the running for the nation's highest-ranked recruiting class on National Signing Day, or even the SEC's. By the time September arrives, the 2018 edition of the Crimson Tide may look as different from the one that preceded it as any since the earliest days of Saban's tenure.

It will share at least one key similarity, though, in that when the major preseason polls are released in August, Alabama will almost certainly be sitting on top. If so, it will mark the third consecutive year the Tide have opened at No. 1, and the eleventh in a row that they've occupied the top spot at some point in the season. If they finish there, again, Saban will match Bear Bryant's record of six national championships with the same school and move into first place on the all-time list with his seventh title overall. It took the Bear 19 years to reach his mark, including a pair of highly dubious crowns in 1964 and 1973, in the days when they were handed out prior to bowl games. Saban can earn his sixth in just 10 years, none of them disputed, and in the process pass Minnesota's Bernie Bierman (who claimed five titles from 1934-41) for most championships in the span of a single decade.

Already in that span Saban has won it all with six different coordinators and four different starting quarterbacks, not to mention a fifth coming off the bench; already he has more national titles to his credit than the rest of the active FBS head coaching ranks combined. All that's left is to add the one that will put any and all historical comparisons to bed for good, and keep going from there.



A Five-Year War

The twilight of Nick Saban's Alabama career could be marked by a challenge to the Tide dynasty from Kirby Smart and resurgent Georgia

By Matt Hinton

As Southern-fried college football rivalries go, Alabama-Georgia doesn't quite evoke the kind of heat that radiates from the region's more storied hate-fests, and if you're going strictly by the records, it's debatable these days whether Tide-Dawgs really qualifies as a "rivalry" at all. In the 26 years since the SEC split into two divisions, the neighbors have met only nine times, once in the SEC title game. And like just about everything else over the past decade, when they have met, the series has been dominated by the Tide: Alabama has taken four straight over Georgia dating back to 2008 — all of them, in one way or another, in soul-crushing fashion.

From Georgia's perspective, in fact, success (or lack thereof) has been increasingly defined by life on the other side of the fence. More than anything else, it was arguably the failure to measure up to Bama's domineering standards that finally doomed Mark Richt, a widely respected coach whose fate was more or less sealed in a blowout loss to the Tide in 2015, a loss that convinced the Bulldogs to poach long-time Alabama assistant Kirby Smart to take his place. Two years later, Smart's record against his old team stands at 0–1.

In context, however, that one loss looks much more like a glimpse of a bright future than the latest mark on an underachieving past. As deflating as Georgia's skin-of-the-teeth, overtime loss in January's National Championship Game felt in the moment, it was unmistakably a collision of equals. More than equals, actually; more like mirror images. The big-picture takeaway was also obvious: Smart's Bulldogs had arrived, fully formed, as a kind of identical sibling to Nick Saban's Crimson juggernaut. Whatever gap still existed between the two sides had been effectively reduced — after 60-plus minutes and a desperate quarterback change by Saban, who for the first time in his life seemed relieved by victory — to one play, a coin flip on the sport's biggest stage.

Round 1 came up Bama; officially, Round 2 isn't scheduled until the next regular-season Tide-Dawgs tilt in 2020. But if the game and the season that preceded Tua Tagovailoa's winning OT heave were any indication, it's not going to take nearly that long. It was only the opening salvo in a border war that stands to define the SEC, and potentially college football as a whole, for the foreseeable future.

It seems so inevitable now, in hindsight. But it's worth remembering that when Georgia hired Smart as its new head coach, in December 2015, it looked more like an audacious gamble, one that was as likely to blow up in UGA's face as it was to pay off in an imminent playoff run. For one thing, it wasn't obvious that the Bulldogs would necessarily be better off with Smart, a first-time head coach, than they'd been under Richt, owner of the best career winning percentage at Georgia since the Great Depression. At 39, Smart was younger at the time than any of the SEC's incumbent head coaches. And it's not like hiring a Saban protégé to reverse-engineer the Alabama Death Star was some kind of novel idea: Tennessee and Florida had both gone that route — twice, in the Gators' case — and wound up regretting it. After Smart's uninspiring 8–5 debut in 2016, there was an even chance Georgia would, too, accompanied by a helping of humble pie.

Instead, the gamble has already begun to pay off in spades, more quickly than even the early believers could have predicted. Even the initial setback can be retrofitted to fit snugly within the larger narrative: After all, Saban's 2007 debut in Tuscaloosa was even worse, a 7–6 slog that gave no indication that the same team would emerge as a fully operational juggernaut in Year 2 en route to a national championship in Year 3. So far, Smart is almost eerily on schedule. Even more striking than the timing, though, is the

Smart: Paul Abell; Saban: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Hayes and Schembechler: AP; Smart and Saban: Getty Images

product itself, where the full extent of Smart's influence (and, by extension, Saban's) was obvious and uncanny. By midseason, it was inescapable just how much Smart's new team really did look like his old one, athletically and philosophically, effectively mirroring the standard Saban outfit right down to the fact that Georgia's star quarterback, Jake Fromm, was once committed to play for the Crimson Tide.

Under different circumstances, the Bulldogs ascension might sound like too much too soon for a program that's managed only one year of championship-level success — a relatively out-of-the-blue one, at that — and which lost more than a dozen veteran starters from that team, almost all of them draft picks. After all, LSU, Auburn and Florida have had their turns in the championship circle in the past decade, too, without coming close to challenging Alabama's long-term dominance for more than a year or two at a time.

The timing of the Bulldogs' on-field arrival was perfect, given that it was preceded by a surge on the recruiting trail that only picked up steam as the new administration began to deliver tangible results. The 2017 signing class, the first at Georgia assembled entirely on Smart's watch, ranked third nationally according to the 247Sports Composite rankings and has already produced a trio of budding offensive stars in Fromm, offensive tackle Andrew Thomas and tailback D'Andre Swift, a dark-horse Heisman candidate this fall after serving as an understudy to NFL-bound seniors Nick Chubb and Sony Michel.

This year's class achieved the near impossible, supplanting Alabama atop 247's national rankings for the first time since 2010, and will arrive on campus as one of the most decorated recruiting hauls in recent memory. The incoming crop includes seven prospects with five-star grades according to 247, a record number, plus five more ranked among the top-100 players overall. Aside from Bama, no other SEC team currently has more than four five-star players on its entire roster.

For one more year, at least, it's still the case that the majority of Georgia's front-line starters were recruited to Athens by Richt, whose classes almost always rated highly in their own right. The holdovers laid the foundation for the program's return to the national spotlight. But with that foundation in place, the expectations for the younger half of the roster coming up behind them are as high as for any group of players in school history.

The most famous coaching rivalry in college football, the "Ten Year War" between Ohio State's Woody Hayes and his former assistant, Michigan's Bo Schembechler, was waged from 1969-78. Schembechler edged his old boss, five wins to four, with one tie in 1973 that cost both teams a shot at the then-mythical national championship — and the winner claimed the Big Ten crown every single year. In the 21st Century, the notion of the same two coaches surviving a full decade at the helm of the same two annual contenders, at the same time, is almost quaint. Bob Stoops and Mack Brown had their run in the Oklahoma-Texas series, and … that's about it. In the SEC, Saban has outlasted too many rival head coaches to count, many of whom were put out to pasture specifically for not being Saban-esque enough.



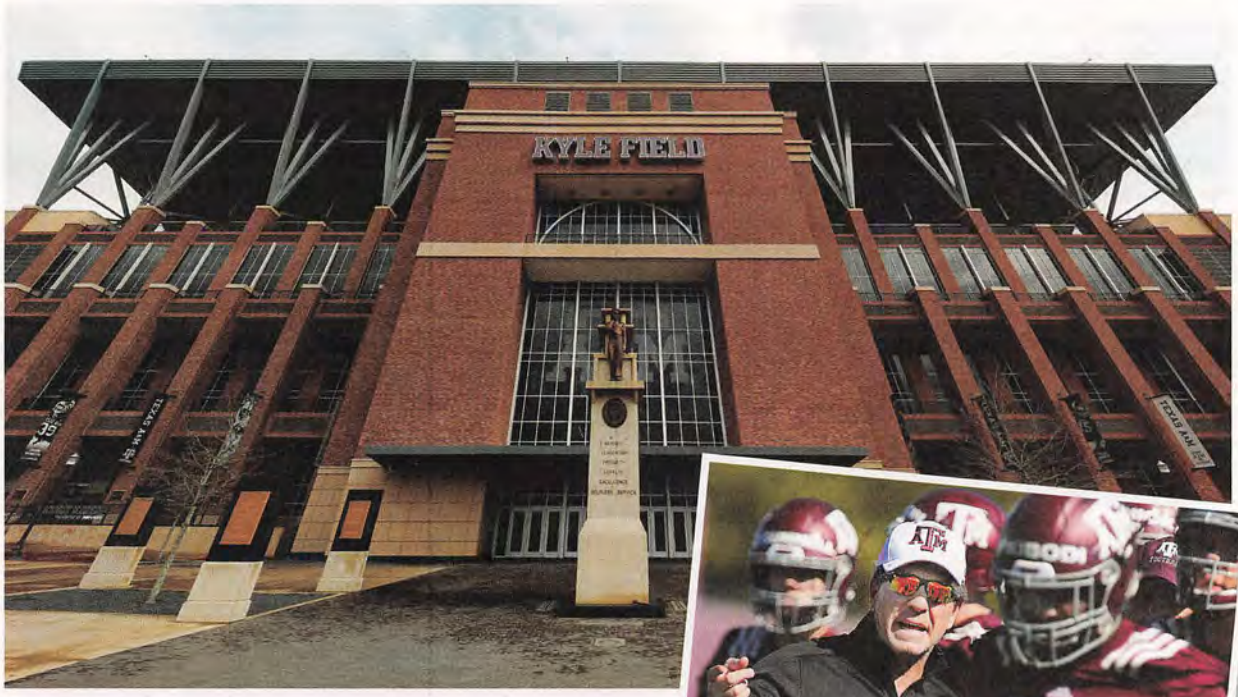
Kirby Smart and Nick Saban could emulate the run of dominance that Bo Schembechler and Woody Hayes enjoyed in the Big Ten decades ago.

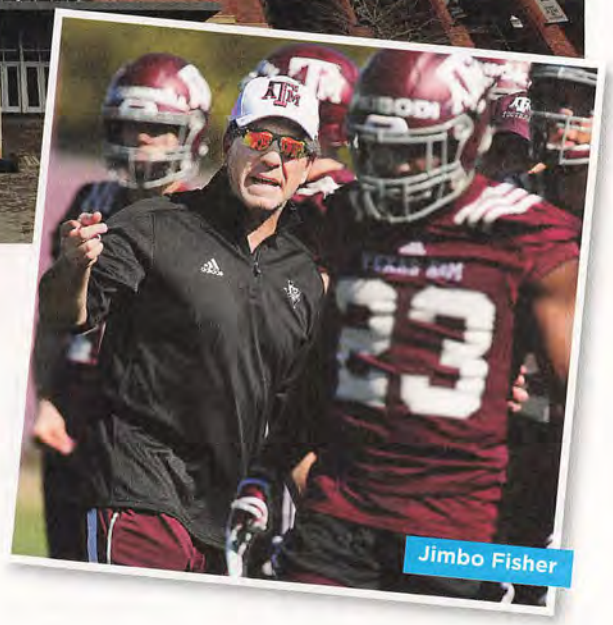


At 66, with six national titles to his credit and nothing left to accomplish, it's hard to imagine Saban grinding through the end of a second decade at Alabama in the mid-2020s.

Until proven otherwise, though, it's just as hard to imagine the Crimson Tide fading from national relevance anytime soon, either. Although the 2020 game in Tuscaloosa is the only regular-season meeting on deck until at least 2025, Georgia's rapid ascendancy under Smart may be the last, best opportunity to spawn something like a sustained Bo-Woody dynamic in the SEC — a Five-Year War — before Saban calls it a career. The East, with Florida and Tennessee hitting reset in the wake of historic collapses, is as ripe for the taking as it has ever been. The West, while significantly more competitive, remains Alabama's domain. Right up to the end, nearly all of last season felt like the prelude to an inevitable Bama-Georgia collision in Atlanta, and the fact that it came a month later than expected didn't diminish the intensity or the anticipation when it finally did arrive. This season, they're runaway favorites to be back there, in December this time but with immediate national implications. Beyond that, there's no reason to believe that Tide-Dawgs for all the SEC marbles can't become an annual rite.

Of course, Auburn plans to have its say in the matter again after unexpectedly delaying last year's battle of the titans, and Florida, Tennessee and Texas A&M all expect their investment in expensive new head coaches to begin paying off in Smart-like fashion sooner than later. Trajectories and narratives and all the assumptions that come with them can change very quickly. But the window is as wide open for Georgia now as it's been for any of the other would-be threats to Bama's throne at any point in the Saban era, and the Bulldogs are ideally positioned to make good. How fitting it would be if the Tide's most worthy rival finally turned out to be the one built most thoroughly in its own image.




Jimbo Fisher

Jimbo Fisher's BIGGEST Challenge

By Michael Bradley

If Texas A&M overcomes decades of underachievement and wins an SEC or even national championship, devoted Aggies should point their beloved class rings skyward as a tribute to Big Jim Fisher.

The Clarksburg, W.Va., native didn't bleed A&M maroon and probably never spent a minute in College Station, but his son is hoping to be there for a long time and to imbue a program that has no peer in terms of tradition but plenty of frustration on the field with the same standards by which Big Jim lived his life.

The word "process" is used across the college football landscape by Nick Saban acolytes, and Fisher is closely tied to the Alabama head coach through his five years as an LSU assistant under the six-time national champion. But ask Fisher about his approach to coaching and the "process" by which he builds programs, and he quickly redirects discussion away from the Crimson Tide boss and to his father.

"That's my dad's line," Fisher says. "Successful people follow a process. If you do the right thing again and again, you're going to be successful."

Fisher has brought his disciplined approach to a school known for adhering closely to its traditions and maxims off the field and in the stands at Kyle Field but which hasn't had the same relationship with the practices necessary to win big on it. Texas A&M has not captured a conference title in 20 years. Since 2000, it has reached double-figure wins once, in 2012. Its combined conference record in six years of SEC play is a lackluster 25–23. Over the past 30 years, it has a 7–16 bowl mark and has won just one postseason game of note, the 2012 Cotton Bowl.

It's not for a lack of financial commitment. In 2015, A&M completed a $485 million overhaul of Kyle Field that boosted capacity to 102,512, tops in the SEC and the fourth largest in the country. The $20.8 million Bright Complex houses the football program and is one of the nation's most impressive. There is a desire to win big from the highest level of the university on down. But the Aggies haven't done it. They are still the butt of jokes from University of Texas fans — who haven't exactly had a lot to cheer about this decade — and are looked at by many around the country as second best in the state, despite the gaudy facilities and impressive loyalty of grads and fans.

"I don't know why they haven't won," Fisher says. "I know what is needed to be successful, and that's what we're putting in here. You can't snap your fingers and have it happen overnight."

Forgive A&M fans for expecting something like that to happen. Fisher will make $75 million over 10 years, a contract that has drawn criticism from others in the college athletics community. Ohio State AD Gene Smith called the deal "ridiculous," probably because he didn't want to take a call from representatives of his coach, Urban Meyer, who made $6.4 million in 2017. During Fisher's eight years at Florida State, he won 83 games,

AP

three ACC titles and the 2013 national championship. Yet, he left Tallahassee for a job that some don't consider comparable, given FSU's success (256 wins, 15 ACC titles, three national championships since 1992) and A&M's relative struggles.

The money helps, although Fisher wasn't exactly eating beans every night at FSU, thanks to a contract extension in 2016 that paid him $5.5 mil last year. So does his relationship with A&M AD Scott Woodward, which the two men forged while both were at LSU early last decade. "We've used each other for sounding boards through the years," Woodward says. Finally, there is the institutional desire to win, which is as strong as, if not stronger than, that at any other university.

"Football matters here," says Woodward, who came to A&M from Washington in 2016. "We want to be excellent in everything we do, and there is a sense of pride here. I took the job here coming from a great institution, but the commitment is unprecedented here. The resources and commitment are so strong."

Not long after Fisher took over in College Station, school administrators presented him with a plaque that read, "Jimbo Fisher, Head Football Coach, Texas A&M University, 20-- Division I Football National Championship". The aspirational trophy was part show of confidence and part reminder that second place isn't the goal, particularly at a school that has spent time on the runner-up step of the podium within its own state.

Fisher's coaching record suggests he has a good chance of satisfying the expectations. And his early returns in Aggieland are encouraging. He was able to fill the 2018 recruiting class with several top prospects, earn a No. 17 national ranking from the 247Sports Composite and get a quick start on 2019. He blended quickly with the A&M community. "Jimbo does a lot of things Aggies do," Woodward says. "He's a hunter and fisherman and loves this type of lifestyle." Fisher is a great storyteller and can relate to big donors and rank-and-file A&M fans, but most important, he has the same no-compromise qualities of the game's most successful coaches.

> "I know what is needed to be successful, and that's what we're putting in here. **You can't snap your fingers and have it happen overnight."**
>
> — Jimbo Fisher

"Jimbo is a very competitive, passionate and energetic guy," says Georgia head coach Kirby Smart, who was on Nick Saban's LSU staff with Fisher in 2004. "He hates losing. He's very demanding and does a very good job leading a program. You saw that at Florida State. He's had a lot of success wherever he has been, because of his work ethic and the fact that he's a good recruiter."

The question many still ask is why Fisher would leave Florida State for the deep, difficult waters of the SEC, even for a lot more money. Although Florida State offered Fisher an environment that was extremely conducive to success, and he insists he had no plans to leave, Fisher has been clear that A&M is one





of the nation's best spots to run a program. "Chancellor [John] Sharp, President [Michael] Young, Scott Woodward and everybody understand that football is an extremely important part of the culture at A&M, and they want to get back to it," Fisher says.

It is a top-flight environment, but there is that small matter of playing in the SEC West, which boasts six other schools with big aspirations. Say what you want about Clemson and the ACC, but the conference is best known for its top-to-bottom basketball success, rather than its overall football prowess. The Big Ten East is pretty formidable, thanks to Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State, but Rutgers, Maryland and Indiana haven't exactly been vying for major bowls lately. As recently as 2014, Mississippi State and Ole Miss were ranked in the top five nationally. And Arkansas finished the 2011 season ranked fifth. All coaches like a challenge, but this one is quite formidable. The battle between A&M's university-wide commitment and the West's treacherous waters could come down to one factor: Fisher himself. How well does he sell A&M, and what can he do with the players he signs in the dangerous West Division?

"He's a very intense coach who is committed to winning and doing it right," says Brad Lawing, a 35-year coaching veteran who was on Fisher's FSU staff for three seasons. "He really cares about the kids. He has a lot of programs set up to help the kids become more than football players.

"He's a very good recruiter, and he's very good with kids. He has a clear vision for what he wants from his players."

When freshmen arrive at Texas A&M, the first thing they encounter is Fish Camp, a ritual designed to introduce them to the school and its many traditions. The newcomers are taken off campus, divided into groups and then taught how to be Aggies. It's not hazing. It's not survival stuff. It's merely a way to learn the many different pieces of the school's rituals and practices. A lot of colleges have unique customs, but there may not be a place more devoted to its history than A&M.

Erik Korem, who spent the first three years of Fisher's tenure at Florida State as a strength and conditioning coach before moving to Kentucky and later the Houston Texans, is a Dallas native who walked on at A&M. He remembers his life as a "fish," as freshmen are called, and though he uses terms like "indoctrinate" and "brainwash" to describe Fish Camp, he considers his time in College Station remarkable and continues to marvel at the bond enjoyed by A&M graduates. Midnight Yell Practice, pregame bonfires, monthly gun salutes to fallen Aggies and the immediate connection created by the school rings that graduates so proudly and persistently wear create an environment that is difficult for alumni of other schools to understand. Enveloping it all is football, the school's serum of life.

"It's a different kind of culture," Korem says. "Football means a lot in Texas, and at that school, it means everything. There is an esprit de corps like nowhere else."

Football sure is big at Florida State. Without the sport — and Bobby Bowden's success coaching it — nobody outside of the Sunshine State would really care about the university. It's a different level of big at A&M. When the football team struggles, the school's identity suffers. All of the tremendous camaraderie built by things like the legend of the 12th Man feeds into the idea that Aggie pride and the student body's support will help win games.

The institutional understanding of football's value is vital, too. People who decry the "arms race" in college sports should take a look at A&M, which has gone to the nuclear option in an attempt to create an environment that is perfectly positioned for success.

"It's a great place to be, but there are a lot of expectations," Korem says. "The culture is amazing, and the support from the students is great. But now that the school has invested so much, I can understand why the expectations are so high."

Texas A&M's decision to leave the Big 12 for the SEC removed it from direct competition with UT, which, no matter how decrepit its facilities had become before Tom Herman took over before last season (he was tearing up carpet in the program's offices himself), was still viewed by most in the state — and beyond — as *the* university of Texas.

The move to the SEC may have distanced the Aggies

AP

from Austin, but it brought them closer to the West Division powerhouses, which have won eight of the last 15 national championships. Fisher can sell the opportunity to play against the best, but he also has to beat the best. For him, Texas is a rival on the recruiting trails, but his real competition can be found in Tuscaloosa, Baton Rouge and other SEC locations.

"We worry about what we can worry about and sell what we can sell," Fisher says. "Texas is a rivalry, but I'm worried about what's to the east.

"We can't worry about [the University of] Texas."

That may not play so well with some Aggie faithful, who would rather give up barbecue than lose to the Longhorns. But Fisher is correct when he says A&M should focus on the games on its schedule, not the ghosts of football past. Winning big in the SEC will be the best antidote to Aggie jokes and any perceived arrogance that comes from Austin. And though some wonder whether it was a good idea to leave the Big 12 — UT be damned — A&M is committed to the SEC and finding success there.

"I was just discussing this with a major donor," Woodward says. "This is probably, as far as college and conference realignment go, the best marriage I can remember.

"It's a win-win at the highest grade of magnitude."

Fisher's job at Texas A&M is a big one, and some look at lifting the Aggies into the national title discussion as impossible, given the competition they face in their own neighborhood. And that doesn't even include the battle with Texas on the recruiting trail. But try to imagine what might happen if the Aggies win it all. They could name the school after Fisher. Perhaps that's why he took the job. The risk is high, but the opportunity for reward — beyond his paycheck — is almost unfathomable. For a school where football is identity, a national championship would provide the ultimate definition. That school ring wouldn't just signify membership in a specific community. It would confer nationwide status.

"That's why I'm here," Fisher says. "It's a great opportunity."

And another chance to prove the benefits of Big Jim's process.


Chad Morris

THE NEW HEAD HOG

Arkansas turns to Chad Morris in its effort to return to relevance in the SEC West

During the halcyon days of the old Southwest Conference, Arkansas jutted out from Texas like a sixth toe of sorts. Eight of the schools flew the Lone Star flag, while the Razorbacks sat to the northeast, SWC members but certainly not Texas.

Unless you looked at the roster. Sure, the Hogs grabbed every standout they could from the home state, but they also dipped into Texas for talent. UA stalwarts Chuck Dicus, Loyd Phillips, Lance Alworth, Bill Montgomery and Joe Ferguson were all Texas natives, and new Hogs coach Chad Morris understands the importance of looking to other locales to fill out recruiting classes.

"When Arkansas was in its heyday, it won with a mix of players from Arkansas and Texas, Tulsa and Memphis," he says. That's the footprint we need to win at Arkansas."

Morris sure knows Texas. He spent 16 years as a head coach in the state, and as recently as 2009 he was on a prep sideline. His rise from Friday night to the big chair in the SEC program has been meteoric and is due to his potent offensive mind, attention to detail and commitment to doing things right. In just nine years, he has gone from Tulsa's offensive coordinator to OC at Clemson to SMU's head-coaching spot to Fayetteville, where he will try to help the Hogs gain traction in the treacherous West Division.

He'll have a dangerous scheme, all right, but he needs the players to make it work. When Morris estimates that 2019 "will be a good year" for in-state players, he means there are seven or eight prospects good enough to win in the SEC. Florida this ain't. Even though Morris has already built relationships with coaches and prospects throughout The Natural State, the bulk of his recruiting classes will have to come from Somewhere Else.

"We have to make the logo popular," he says about Arkansas' charging razorback. "Right now, it's not popular. There are two types of recruits. One says, 'The logo's popular, and I want to go there.' The other says. 'That logo isn't popular; I want to make it popular.'"

Morris has been popular for a while. He helped Clemson make a power move nationally with his attack and became the highest-paid D-I assistant in the process. At SMU, he took over a 1-10 team and lifted it to 7-5 three years later. He comes to Arkansas with the requisite Texas roots, a hot system and a mandate to compete at the highest FBS levels possible.

"Everywhere he's been, whether it's been as a high school coach, offensive coordinator at Tulsa, coordinator at Clemson and at SMU, he's had success," says Arkansas AD Hunter Yurachek. "He has brought the type of culture and attention to detail that a young person needs to have to be successful in the classroom and on the field on Saturday."

Now, he just needs to sell that — inside and outside the state of Arkansas.

— Michael Bradley

Bayou Offensive

Despite a wealth of talent on offense, LSU's search for consistent production continues under (another) new offensive coordinator, Steve Ensminger

By Ian Boyd



LSU's decade-long quest for an explosive offense has been bafflingly futile. Despite consistently fielding some of the best athletes and most physical offensive lines in the country, the Tigers have routinely been unable to light up the scoreboard without considerable help from their defense and special teams.

The offensive design for much of the decade has been a traditional, under-center offense with a heavy focus on a diverse, downhill run game bolstered by play-action. On obvious passing downs, the offense would mix in shotgun-spread sets and run pro-style passing concepts, much like any other pro-style offense at the NFL or collegiate levels.

The ground-based part of the offense has been exceptionally effective. The only seasons in which LSU failed to produce a 1,000-yard rusher in the last decade came as the result of a committee approach. Where the program has run into problems has been in the passing game, especially against teams with the size and athleticism to limit the run game. That's been the main reason for the Tigers' struggles against Alabama (the Tide are on a seven-game winning streak against the Tigers), but it's also been an issue against many of the Auburn, Georgia and Florida squads LSU has faced.

LSU has learned that it's very difficult at the college level to build a high-level, under-center running game and simultaneously teach your players to execute a pro-style passing game. Both endeavors require layered concepts and high-level teaching, particularly the passing game — which requires that the QB and receivers get on the same page with timing and route adjustments while the offensive line has to master pass protection and blitz pickup. A college football player's jam-packed schedule doesn't lend itself to reaching proficiency in both realms.

The issue has been made worse by LSU's tendency to recruit QBs who are athletic and strong-armed but inexperienced and raw as passers. The Tigers have fielded athlete after athlete at the position who struggled to master the passing game and whose physical abilities were consequently wasted.

2010s: LSU's passing-down woes

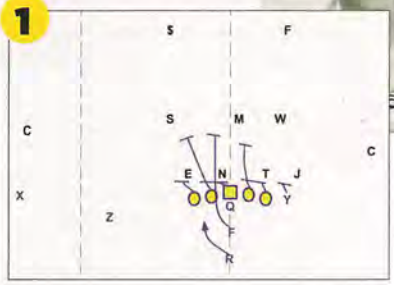
The powers-that-be determined that they'd seen enough of LSU's limited pro-style offense after Auburn defeated the Tigers 18–13 in 2016 while holding LSU QB Danny Etling to 118 passing yards and 4.4 yards per attempt. The Tigers' futility even with explosive running back Leonard Fournette (who ran for 101 yards at 6.3 yards per carry in that game) was deemed unacceptable, and head coach Les Miles was fired in favor of defensive line coach and ace recruiter Ed Orgeron.

Orgeron immediately fired offensive coordinator Cam Cameron and promoted tight ends coach Steve Ensminger to OC and QB coach.

Ensminger understood that while LSU had a dominant offensive player in Fournette, opposing teams knew he was getting the ball, and LSU wasn't able to attack the full field or make use of its other skill athletes to keep pressure and attention away from the run game.

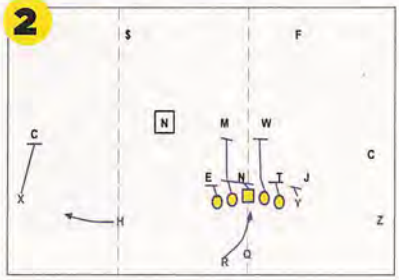
Under Cameron, the foundational play of the LSU offense had been the lead stretch play, run from under center with a tight end and a fullback on the field. The O-line would execute outside zone blocks looking to stretch out the defense horizontally, while the fullback would lead through a resulting crease to drive block a laterally moving linebacker and clear a lane for the running back:

1



With Ensminger in charge, the first play that LSU ran against Alabama that season was instead a spread staple:

2



The Tigers traded the fullback for another receiver and moved star wide-out Malachi Dupre (H) into the slot. Etling read the Alabama nickel DB lined up over Dupre, and when that player charged in to blitz the run game, Etling quickly flipped a bubble screen out to Dupre in space.

With Ensminger in charge, the Tigers looked to spread the ball around more, involving backup running back

Year	Passing down S&P+	Offensive Coordinator/Quarterback
2010	74th	Gary Crowton/Jordan Jefferson & Jarrett Lee
2011	2nd	Greg Studrawa/Jarrett Lee & Jordan Jefferson
2012	46th	Greg Studrawa/Zach Mettenberger
2013	6th	Cam Cameron/Zach Mettenberger
2014	48th	Cam Cameron/Anthony Jennings
2015	27th	Cam Cameron/Brandon Harris
2016	19th	Steve Ensminger/Danny Etling
2017	57th	Matt Canada/Danny Etling

Ensminger: Steve Franz/LSU Athletics; Canada: Chris Parent/LSU Athletics

Derrius Guice on some of these screens as a receiver until Fournette went down with an injury and Guice took over the duties as the main back. Dupre was perhaps the primary beneficiary of Ensminger's takeover as he became much more involved in LSU's game plans after the change. The Tigers were now mixing in spread-option plays to force opponents to cover their skill athletes in space rather than relying on the occasional play-action rollout or deep shot to punish teams for loading the box against their standard run game.

The Tigers were still shut out by Alabama and thwarted against Florida due to a pair of fumbles and, ironically, a goal-line stand by the Gators against the Tigers run game. However, the trend line was positive, and the team showed enough progress — most notably on the offensive side of the ball — that Orgeron had the interim tag removed.

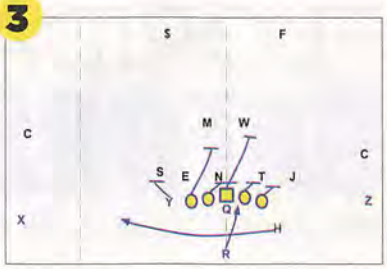
The Canada foray

Part of Orgeron's pitch to LSU in his interview was a smaller personal salary and an emphasis on going out to hire the best and brightest coordinators in the country and paying them enough to stick around. That meant a raise for brilliant defensive coordinator Dave Aranda (and subsequent raises of incredible value) as well as the demotion of Ensminger in order to pursue higher-profile OC targets. The Tigers eventually landed Matt Canada, fresh off a highly successful 2016 season with the Pittsburgh Panthers that included a thrilling shootout victory over eventual national champion Clemson.

Like Ensminger, Canada wanted to include the Tigers' other skill players within the basic run game package so that opponents couldn't zero in on LSU's running backs. However, Canada's offense did so with the jet sweep:


Matt Canada

3



The Tigers continued to run zone and power run schemes for their star running backs but would leave the backside defensive end or outside linebacker unblocked and send receivers on sweeps across the formation. If the DEs or OLBs would crash to stop the running plays, LSU would mix in the sweeps and hit them with punishing gains around the edge. Many teams had to use a defensive end to contain the sweeps, leaving them more vulnerable to the downhill run game.

Despite the new creativity in the ground game, LSU's passing game continued to be limited, and teams that could handle their sweep constraints without leaving big creases for the run game were able to squeeze the Tigers offense.

Back to Ensminger

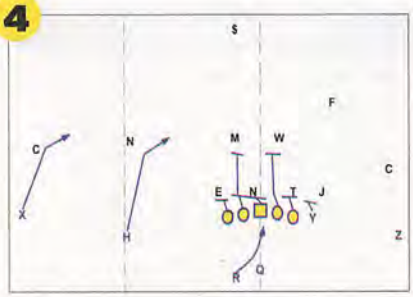
The dynamics between Canada and the rest of the LSU staff were evidently strained; Canada negotiated a buyout so that he could leave the program before the Citrus Bowl against Notre Dame. Rather than seeking out another big-name hire, Orgeron took the opportunity to reinstall Ensminger as the OC for the 2018 season.

The difference this time is that Ensminger can run his own system rather than working with an offensive shell created and installed by another coach. That system promises to look more like the plan that LSU brought into the Alabama game back in 2016, emphasizing spread sets and pass options attached to the running game.

The major evolution here is one toward spread tactics that can make the wide receivers a major part of the plan on first down rather than occasional deep-shot targets who mostly wait around for third-and-8. LSU has remained a standard bearer for the blocking tight end and traditional fullback for some time now, but that will finally change this season.

Instead of teaching those positions to execute a variety of blocks, the Tigers will put more receivers on the field to run a variety of routes designed to "block" those defenders. For instance, the inside zone play is often a favorite building block for the spread offense and served as the run call in the play that Ensminger called against Alabama (diagram 2). But the offense can attach a variety of route combinations to the run in order to punish different defenses for the way they try to bring extra players up to stop the run. If the other team wants to play zone, then the receivers can run screens as described above, but if they want to play man coverage, then perhaps the receivers will run slants:

4



When an offense has a go-to receiver who excels at running quick routes, he can become a de facto running back who regularly gets the ball on standard downs via these quick passes. The benefits of this are two-fold: First, the defense has to worry about two star skill players on first down (the RB and a WR) rather than being able to focus more easily on just the back. Secondly, the offense can fit quarterback reads and route combinations into the practice schedule more easily since the run game and passing game are no longer divorced.

The offensive line still has to learn how to execute pass protection for passing downs when run-pass options (RPOs) aren't a good fit, but at least the practice of reading coverage and nailing down timing and chemistry with the wideouts is getting more play throughout the week.

This is the path that other formerly I-formation-based offenses such as Alabama and USC have chosen. Now, Ensminger will aim to update the LSU offense in an effort to keep up and finally end years of offensive struggles in Baton Rouge.

FLORIDA GATORS

National Forecast: 17 /// SEC East Prediction: 2

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Charleston Southern
Sept. 8	Kentucky
Sept. 15	Colorado State
Sept. 22	at Tennessee
Sept. 29	at Mississippi State
Oct. 6	LSU
Oct. 13	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27	vs. Georgia #
Nov. 3	Missouri
Nov. 10	South Carolina
Nov. 17	Idaho
Nov. 24	at Florida State

#Jacksonville, FL

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 8-4, 5-3 SEC

Florida made one of the best hires of the offseason, luring Dan Mullen from Mississippi State — and the Gators should expect immediate results. Despite last year's four-win season, the Gators still have plenty of talent on the roster. Leading the way for Mullen's first team will be a defense that returns six starters and has the potential to be dominant. Florida's secondary and defensive line are among the best in the SEC. Offense has been a problem recently, as the Gators have finished eighth or worse in scoring in league play in each of the last five years. Mullen's background on offense, along with a deep stable of running backs, should provide an instant spark. Quarterback uncertainty looms over this team, but a manageable schedule should allow Mullen to double Florida's win total from 2017.

Postseason: Outback Bowl vs. Purdue

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Dan Mullen

RECORD AT SCHOOL
First Season

CAREER RECORD
69-46 (9 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Billy Gonzales, John Hevesy

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Todd Grantham

LOCATION
Gainesville, FL

STADIUM
Ben Hill Griffin Stadium (88,548)

Dan Mullen was in Gainesville when the Florida Gators last ruled college football. He returned to find a once-proud program in shambles following a 4–7 season.

After building moribund Mississippi State into a competitive SEC program, the 46-year-old inherits a rebuilding project more daunting than the one he encountered in 2005 as Florida's offensive coordinator on Urban Meyer's first-year staff.


TYRIE CLEVELAND

The SEC has changed since then. Alabama's sustained dominance, Georgia's rapid rise and former coach Jim McElwain's failures leave Florida facing a long climb to re-join the league's upper echelon.

Mullen has not backed down from the challenge. During a halftime speech at a January basketball game, he promised to deliver fans another national title. Mullen doubled down a month later with similar claims during a statewide speaking tour.

Mullen knows what it takes to win at Florida, having called plays for the Gators' last SEC and national title teams in 2008. Florida's current roster, though, does not feature that team's level of talent. Mullen insists the cupboard isn't bare, despite McElwain's inability to ink a top-10 recruiting class in three years. "We're still Florida," he says. "It's not like we have no talent on the roster."

Gator Nation is most eager to see Mullen develop a quarterback — the program's Achilles heel since Tim Tebow left in 2009. Yet, every unit has question marks following Florida's second losing season since 1980. Mullen plans to find answers quickly. Meyer won his first of two national titles at Florida in Year 2. Mullen was there and understands what can be accomplished at this sleeping giant.

QUARTERBACKS From Alex Smith to Tebow to Dak Prescott, Mullen's Midas touch with quarterbacks has been impressive. He might need to be a miracle worker this season. The 2017 Gators used three different starters, including Feleipe Franks. Now a redshirt sophomore, Franks is the only Florida QB with experience — much of it bad for the 20-year-old. Franks opened last season under center, was benched three times and finished with nine touchdowns and eight interceptions. Mullen loves the 6'5", 227-pound Franks' arm strength and athleticism, which were seen last year when he completed a 63-yard game-winning touchdown to beat Tennessee and ripped off a 79-yard run during a loss to Texas A&M. Franks now must prove he has the head for the college game. After missing last season following foot surgery, 6'5", 239-pound sophomore Kyle Trask is the team's best pure passer. He also wasn't even his high school's starter. Freshman Emory Jones headlined Mullen's 2018 recruiting class. A dual-threat quarterback, the 6'2", 192-pound Jones is well suited to Mullen's spread offense. The 18-year-old must develop physically and mentally after facing small-school competition in Georgia.

RUNNING BACKS Tailback Jordan Scarlett entered preseason camp last August poised to become a 1,000-yard rusher. Instead, he was among nine players suspended for their roles in a credit card fraud scheme. Scarlett now returns on a short leash with a

Tom DiPace

new coaching staff and looking to make up for lost time. The 5'11", 206-pound junior is a violent runner who totaled 889 rushing yards despite sharing carries much of the 2016 season. But he lacks the instincts of sophomore Malik Davis. With Scarlett out, Davis emerged as Florida's most explosive, elusive runner until a season-ending knee injury in late October. Junior Lamical Perine is a solid backup with a nose for the end zone (team-high nine total TDs in 2017). Sophomore Adarius Lemons is a big-play threat but struggles with the position's finer points.

RECEIVERS Top receiver Antonio Callaway was among the suspended Gators and then bolted for the NFL following two productive yet trouble-filled seasons. Two transfers hope to fill the void but need the NCAA to declare them eligible in 2018. No Florida wideout stood out during the spring like sure-handed Ole Miss transfer Van Jefferson, son of 13-year NFL veteran and Miami Dolphins receivers coach Shawn Jefferson. No Gator wideout offers Ohio State transfer Trevon Grimes' size (6'5", 214) and leaping ability. Junior deep threat Tyrie Cleveland and playmaking sophomore Kadarius Toney are the top returners. Each must expand their skill sets and stay healthy. Cleveland had catches of 63, 50, 49 and 45 yards until a high ankle sprain Oct. 1 against Vanderbilt, but he's been a one-trick pony. Toney, a former high school QB, is hard to contain, but he drops too many passes. The rest of the unit, including juniors Josh Hammond and Freddie Swain, has underperformed. UF's tight ends have been missing in action. Senior C'yontai Lewis looks to salvage a once-promising career.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Left tackle Martez Ivey could have been in an NFL training camp this summer. Instead, the senior (who turns 25 before the season) had unfinished business at Florida. He's not the only one. Ivey is among five returning starters from a unit that was pushed around once again last season. Quarterback issues aside, Florida's offensive struggles the past three seasons have started in the trenches. The Gators are counting on a new O-line coach, John Hevesy, and a vigorous offseason program to help Ivey and Co. finally reach their potential. Monster right tackle Jawaan Taylor (6'5", 334) has NFL potential, but he and scrappy center T.J. McCoy look to rebound from sophomore slumps. Like Ivey, seniors Tyler Jordan and Fred Johnson have one more chance to get it right. Sophomore left guard Brett Heggie, the Gators' most consistent offensive lineman last season, must recover from a knee injury suffered Nov. 5 at Missouri. Whoever lines up along the front holds the key to Florida's 2018 season.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN New defensive coordinator Todd Grantham's 3-4 alignment could be a game changer for several Gators. Senior



RB **JORDAN SCARLETT**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY GATORS

CECE JEFFERSON, DL Led team with 13.5 tackles for a loss (4.5 sacks) last year, but has just 9.5 sacks in three seasons. Jefferson could shine in Todd Grantham's 3-4 scheme.

KADARIUS TONEY, WR The sophomore jack-of-all-trades is custom fit for Dan Mullen's spread offense. Toney can handle snaps out of the Wildcat formation or line up at slot receiver.

MARTEZ IVEY, OT Returns for his senior season looking to finally get it right. The nation's top recruit in '15 has been the face of an underachieving O-line.

JORDAN SCARLETT, RB Suspended last season, Scarlett is a violent, determined runner with 1,000-yard potential.

DAVID REESE, LB Reese is the quarterback of the defense and one of its most productive, dependable members. Had a team-high 102 stops last season.

KEY LOSSES

ANTONIO CALLAWAY, WR In 2015-16, Callaway had more catches (89), receiving yards (1,399) and total touchdowns (11) than any other UF receiver.

TAVEN BRYAN, DT The 6'5", 291-pound Bryan was a force in the middle of the Gators' D, totaling 40 tackles (six for a loss) while routinely drawing double teams.

DUKE DAWSON, DB Dawson was a mainstay in the secondary the past two seasons, totaling 16 passes defensed (five INTs) in 2016-17.

EDDY PINEIRO, K Pineiro closed his career making 16 straight field goals and hit five 50-yarders in two seasons.

JOHNNY TOWNSEND, P Townsend led the nation the past two seasons and ended his career with an average of 46.2 yards — an SEC record.

RISING STAR

MARCO WILSON was a complete corner as a freshman and is poised to become a star. He led the Gators with 10 pass breakups and was a sure tackler. Older brother and former Gator Quincy is in the NFL but was not as polished as his little brother at this point.

Cece Jefferson hopes a bigger emphasis on his pass-rushing skills off the edge raises his NFL stock. Ditto fellow ends Jachai Polite, Jeremiah Moon and Antonneous Clayton. Each is longer and as fleet afoot as the 6'1", 242-pound Jefferson, but none has his raw power. Jabari Zuniga and Zachary Carter have the strength and versatility needed on the strong side. The Gators have much to prove inside, but massive sophomore Tedarrell Slaton has star potential. Elijah Conliffe and Kyree Campbell should be factors inside, while senior Khairi Clark will get snaps at nose tackle based on his experience, guts and guile.

LINEBACKERS Inside linebacker David Reese posted a 102-tackle season as a sophomore due to instincts, tenacity and sure tackling. Reese's lack of speed limited him to making plays mostly between the tackles. But the unit would have been lost without him. Vosean Joseph showed he was a hard hitter as a freshman but was exposed last season for being undisciplined. Junior Kylan Johnson, a former high school quarterback, can play the run and pass but was plagued by a hamstring injury in 2017. Keep an eye on Rayshad Jackson. The junior could not get on the field under the former staff but was starting inside during the spring. The Gators need speedy redshirt freshmen Ventrell Miller and James Houston to contribute following suspensions last season.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (10)					
WR	87	Van Jefferson (Jr.)	**10**	**Josh Hammond (Jr.)**	
WR	**89**	**Tyrie Cleveland (Jr.)**	16	Freddie Swain (Jr.)	
WR	17	Kadarius Toney (So.)	9	Dre Massey (Sr.)	
LT	**73**	**Martez Ivey (Sr.)**	55	Noah Banks (Jr.)	
LG	**61**	**Brett Heggie (So.)**	64	Tyler Jordan (Sr.)	
C	**59**	**T.J. McCoy (Jr.)**	66	Nick Buchanan (Jr.)	
RG	**74**	**Fred Johnson (Sr.)**	75	T.J. Moore (Fr.)	
RT	**65**	**Jawaan Taylor (Jr.)**	72	Stone Forsythe (So.)	
TE	**80**	**C'yontai Lewis (Sr.)**	45	R.J. Raymond (Sr.)	
QB	**13**	**Feleipe Franks (So.)**	11	Kyle Trask (So.)	
RB	25	Jordan Scarlett (Jr.)	**22**	**Lamical Perine (Jr.)**	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	92	Jabari Zuniga (Jr.)	94	Zachary Carter (Fr.)	
NT	**54**	**Khairi Clark (Sr.)**	57	Elijah Conliffe (So.)	
DT	56	Tedarrell Slaton (So.)	98	Luke Ancrum (Jr.)	
RUSH	**96**	**Cece Jefferson (Sr.)**	99	Jachai Polite (Jr.)	
ILB	**33**	**David Reese (Jr.)**	28	Kylan Johnson (Jr.)	
ILB	44	Rayshad Jackson (Jr.)	**11**	**Vosean Joseph (Jr.)**	
CB	**3**	**Marco Wilson (So.)**	35	Trey Dean (Fr.)	
CB	5	CJ Henderson (So.)	6	Brian Edwards (So.)	
NB	**23**	**C. Gardner-Johnson (Jr.)**	13	Donovan Stiner (So.)	
S	2	Brad Stewart (So.)	30	Amari Burney (Fr.)	
S	29	Jeawon Taylor (Jr.)	31	Shawn Davis (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K		Evan McPherson (Fr.)	**KR**	32	Adarius Lemons (So.)
P	88	Tommy Townsend (Jr.)	**PR**	17	Kadarius Toney (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS The 2017 Gators secondary was supposed to backslide. Instead, it reloaded. Sophomores Marco Wilson and CJ Henderson now form one of the SEC's best cornerback tandems. Both suffered some growing pains in 2017. But Wilson had a team-high 10 pass breakups and was a surprisingly sure tackler. Henderson returned two of his four interceptions for TDs. Highly touted freshman cornerback Trey Dean will be the primary backup. Lined up at safety, natural cornerback Chauncey Gardner-Johnson missed as many tackles as he made last September. He rebounded to finish with 58 stops, including six for a loss, and nine passes defensed. The uber-talented junior now moves to nickel back, leaving the safety in the hands of promising sophomores Brad Stewart and Shawn Davis and junior Jeawon Taylor, the leader of the group if he can stay healthy.

SPECIALISTS Punter Johnny Townsend and kicker Eddy Pineiro leave huge shoes to fill. Townsend led the nation the past two seasons, while Pineiro's field goal percentage of 88.4 (38-of-43) is best in school history. Townsend's brother, Tommy, looks to continue the family tradition. Mullen also landed the nation's top-rated kicker, Evan McPherson. Florida finished last in the SEC on punt returns and 10th on kickoffs. Toney will handle punts and Lemons kickoffs. Both are explosive athletes, but blocking must dramatically improve.

Toney: Tom DiPace; Wilson: Layne Murdoch

2018 FLORIDA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
12	Allen, Jake	6-3/199	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
13	Franks, Feleipe	6-5/227	So.	Crawfordville, FL
14	Jones, Emory	6-2/192	Fr.	LaGrange, GA
19	Ruskell, Jack	6-2/195	Fr.	Libertyville, IL
11	Trask, Kyle	6-5/239	So.	Manvel, TX

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
24	Clement, Iverson	5-11/193	Fr.	Mount Holly, NJ
20	Davis, Malik	5-11/194	So.	Tampa, FL
37	Hopkins, Tyriek	5-8/178	Jr.	St. Petersburg, FL
32	Lemons, Adarius	6-0/201	So.	Clearwater, FL
22	Perine, Lamical	5-11/218	Jr.	Mobile, AL
29	Pierce, Dameon	5-10/207	Fr.	Bainbridge, GA
25	Scarlett, Jordan	5-11/206	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
25	Askeland, Erik	6-0/179	Fr.	Indian Harbour Beach, FL
89	Cleveland, Tyrie	6-2/205	Jr.	Houston, TX
38	Giglia, Anthony	5-11/187	Sr.	Clermont, FL
18	Green, Daquon	6-1/195	So.	Tampa, FL
81	Grimes, Trevon	6-5/214	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
10	Hammond, Josh	6-1/187	Jr.	Hallandale, FL
43	Jarriel, Glenn	5-7/186	Jr.	Okeechobee, FL
87	Jefferson, Van	6-2/192	Jr.	Brentwood, TN
9	Massey, Dre	5-9/186	Sr.	Greenville, SC
39	Mesenger, Jacob	5-8/174	Sr.	Sunrise, FL
43	Sutton, Nicolas	5-9/181	So.	Deltona, FL
16	Swain, Freddie	6-0/194	Jr.	Ocala, FL
84	Thompson, Trey	6-2/201	Fr.	Jupiter, FL
17	Toney, Kadarius	5-11/194	So.	Mobile, AL
27	Tse, Joshua	5-7/168	Fr.	Port Orange, FL
83	Wells, Rick	6-0/202	So.	Jacksonville, FL

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
88	Gamble, Kemore	6-3/255	Fr.	Miami, FL
46	Gornto V, Harry	6-1/189	Jr.	Fort Walton Beach, FL
36	Gross, Dennis	6-6/230	Jr.	Orlando, FL
80	Lewis, C'yontai	6-4/235	Sr.	Eutaw, AL
45	Raymond, R.J.	6-2/253	Sr.	Atlantic Beach, FL
86	Saldivar, Andres	6-2/209	Jr.	Miami, FL
82	Stephens, Moral	6-4/251	Sr.	Perry, FL

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
55	Banks, Noah	6-6/315	Jr.	Pensacola, FL
67	Bleich, Christopher	6-5/330	Fr.	Hanover Township, PA
66	Buchanan, Nick	6-3/283	Jr.	Dunwoody, GA
79	DeLance, Jean	6-5/314	So.	Mesquite, TX
72	Forsythe, Stone	6-7/329	So.	Winter Garden, FL
53	Harkless, Kavaris	6-4/311	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
61	Heggie, Brett	6-4/330	So.	Mount Dora, FL
73	Ivey, Martez	6-5/315	Sr.	Apopka, FL
74	Johnson, Fred	6-6/330	Sr.	West Palm Beach, FL
64	Jordan, Tyler	6-4/310	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
59	McCoy, T.J.	6-1/314	Jr.	Clermont, FL
77	Mike, Andrew	6-6/301	Sr.	Tucson, AZ
75	Moore, T.J.	6-5/305	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
70	Rowell, Tanner	6-2/298	So.	Melbourne, FL
65	Taylor, Jawaan	6-5/334	Jr.	Cocoa, FL
60	Underwood, Houston	6-2/291	Jr.	Miramar, FL
71	Villano, Nick	6-3/312	Jr.	Wellington, FL
62	Washington, James	6-1/241	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
98	Ancrum, Luke	6-5/263	Jr.	Sebring, FL
55	Campbell, Kyree	6-3/305	So.	Woodbridge, VA
94	Carter, Zachary	6-4/270	Fr.	Tampa, FL
54	Clark, Khairi	6-1/315	Sr.	Hollywood, FL
90	Clayton, Antonneous	6-2/254	Jr.	Vienna, GA
57	Conliffe, Elijah	6-4/317	So.	Hampton, VA
95	Davis, Keivonnis	6-3/253	Jr.	Miami, FL
91	Dunlap Jr., Marlon	6-3/328	Jr.	Charlotte, NC
93	Gordon, Moses	6-0/278	Jr.	Orlando, FL
96	Jefferson, Cece	6-1/242	Sr.	Glen St. Mary, FL
50	Moon, Jeremiah	6-6/228	So.	Hoover, AL
99	Polite, Jachai	6-2/260	Jr.	Daytona Beach, FL
56	Slaton, Tedarrell	6-4/358	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
92	Zuniga, Jabari	6-3/246	Jr.	Marietta, GA

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
53	Ackerman, Brendan	5-11/221	Fr.	Ocala, FL
34	Brunson, Lacedrick	6-1/229	Fr.	Miami, FL
52	Crum, Quaylin	5-11/216	Fr.	Orlando, FL
41	Houston IV, James	6-1/226	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
44	Jackson, Rayshad	6-0/217	Jr.	Miami, FL
28	Johnson, Kylan	6-2/236	Jr.	Dallas, TX
11	Joseph, Vosean	6-1/227	Jr.	Miami, FL
58	Lawrence, Jahim	6-0/224	Jr.	Hollywood, FL
51	Miller, Ventrell	5-11/222	Fr.	Lakeland, FL
33	Reese, David	6-1/239	Jr.	Farmington, MI
47	Ricks, Isaac	5-8/223	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
40	Smith, Nick	6-1/213	Fr.	Orlando, FL
46	Thomas, Will	5-9/237	So.	Dunnellon, FL
59	Weldon, Danny	6-0/225	Jr.	Tampa, FL

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
21	Burnett, McArthur	5-9/157	So.	Pahokee, FL
30	Burney, Amari	6-1/224	Fr.	St. Petersburg, FL
26	Clay, Robert	5-10/183	Jr.	Pensacola, FL
31	Davis, Shawn	5-11/191	So.	Miami, FL
35	Dean III, Trey	6-2/181	Fr.	Hampton, GA
6	Edwards, Brian	6-2/183	So.	Hollywood, FL
23	Gardner-Johnson, Chauncey	6-0/207	Jr.	Cocoa, FL
5	Henderson, CJ	6-1/186	So.	Miami, FL
27	Lenton, Quincy	5-11/205	So.	Meridian, MS
12	McWilliams, C.J.	5-11/179	So.	Miami, FL
37	Moorer, Patrick	6-1/155	Fr.	Lutz, FL
38	Oelrich, Nick	6-1/198	So.	Newberry, FL
47	Perry, Austin	5-9/172	Fr.	Orlando, FL
42	Sproles, Nick	6-2/211	So.	Winter Park, FL
2	Stewart, Brad	6-0/191	So.	New Orleans, LA
13	Stiner, Donovan	6-1/198	So.	Houston, TX
29	Taylor, Jeawon	6-0/206	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
39	Walters, Brady	5-11/177	Jr.	Clermont, FL
3	Wilson, Marco	6-0/177	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
48	DioGuardi, Brett (LS)	6-3/230	So.	Windermere, FL
41	Farr, Ryan (LS)	6-1/221	Sr.	Henderson, NV
86	Finn, Jacob (P)	6-3/188	So.	Jacksonville, FL
97	Gould, Jon (P)	6-0/180	Jr.	Elkridge, MD
71	Howard, Chris (K)	6-1/214	Fr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
79	Justino, Daniel (K)	5-8/168	So.	Green Cove Springs, FL
98	Powell, Jorge (K)	5-9/176	Sr.	Coral Gables, FL
49	Tilghman, Jacob (LS)	6-2/214	Jr.	Daytona Beach, FL
88	Townsend, Tommy (P)	6-1/175	Jr.	Orlando, FL

SCOUTING THE GATORS

Opposing Coaches Size up Florida

"Tennessee and Florida have some of the same problems. They have some good players, but they have made some mistakes — not so much from a talent perspective but from a character perspective. Player development is something they didn't do a great job of either. But Florida doesn't lack for talent, that's for sure. ... I think Dan Mullen is a really good offensive coach. He was a smart recruiter at Mississippi State. He had a plan for his guys, and he put them in positions to succeed. He did a good job with the offense, developing a spread, quarterback-run offense that played to the strengths of their personnel ... (Defensive coordinator) Todd Grantham is really good. Mississippi State was outstanding on defense last year. They weren't on the field for 70 or 80 plays a game, which showed that Coach Mullen wasn't just an offensive coach trying to put up yards and points. He had a plan how to manage and win games. And that really helped them on defense. ... I don't know if Feleipe Franks is exactly what Dan Mullen wants at the quarterback position at Florida, but I think Franks is a pretty talented dude. Big, athletic guy who can make plays with his feet and his arm. He needs to continue to develop the finer points of being an upper-level quarterback. But I'm sure Dan will do a good job with him. ... They need to identify some playmakers, but Dan will get that offense going. They will score some points."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-7, 3-5 SEC

Sept. 2	vs. Michigan #	L	17-33
Sept. 16	Tennessee	W	26-20
Sept. 23	at Kentucky	W	28-27
Sept. 30	Vanderbilt	W	38-24
Oct. 7	LSU	L	16-17
Oct. 14	Texas A&M	L	17-19
Oct. 28	vs. Georgia %	L	7-42
Nov. 4	at Missouri	L	16-45
Nov. 11	at South Carolina	L	20-28
Nov. 18	UAB	W	36-7
Nov. 25	Florida State	L	22-38

#Arlington %Jacksonville



MARCO WILSON

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Feleipe Franks	**229**	**125**	**1,438**	**9**	**8**
Malik Zaire	56	32	349	0	1

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Lamical Perine	**136**	**562**	**4.1**	**8**
Malik Davis	**79**	**526**	**6.7**	**2**
Mark Thompson	58	297	5.1	3
Adarius Lemons	**19**	**136**	**7.2**	**0**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Brandon Powell	42	406	9.7	3
Tyrie Cleveland	**22**	**410**	**18.6**	**2**
Josh Hammond	**18**	**246**	**13.7**	**0**
Kadarius Toney	**15**	**152**	**10.1**	**0**

KICKING: **Eddy Pineiro, 17-18 FGs, 24-26 PATs, 75 points**

TACKLES: **David Reese, 102; Chauncey Gardner Jr., 58**

SACKS: **Cece Jefferson, 4.5**

INTERCEPTIONS: Duke Dawson, 4; **CJ Henderson, 4**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	22.1 ppg	13	108
Rushing	156.4 ypg	9	75
Passing	179.5 ypg	11	102
Total	335.9 ypg	13	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	27.3 ppg	7	69
Rushing	153.9 ypg	7	50
Passing	195.4 ypg	8	28
Total	349.3 ypg	6	31
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.27	11	89

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

PUMP YOU UP New strength and conditioning coach Nick Savage might have a future as a fitness guru on late-night TV. In two months leading up to spring practices, the 29-year-old whipped many Gators into the best shape of their lives following three years in a strength program that failed to do the job. Players lost an average of 3.5 percent of their body fat. "He could market that and get his own infomercial and make a ton of money," Dan Mullen jokes. One former player was taken aback when he saw his former teammates at Florida's Pro Day. "We looked like the Pillsbury dough boys and now, we're like, swole," defensive tackle Taven Bryan said.

THIS IS AWKWARD To get Jim McElwain away from Colorado State, Florida had to pay his former employer $7 million. In addition to $5 million in cash, the Gators agreed to pay the Rams $2 million for a game in Gainesville, with the expectation obviously that McElwain would be coaching against his former school. McElwain's ouster has created an odd dynamic. But the show will go on Sept. 15 in The Swamp.

THREE AMIGOS The day after he was named the head coach Nov. 26, Mullen placed a call to Billy Gonzales and John Hevesy. Both have been by Mullen's side every step of his career. Mullen, Gonzales and Hevesy first worked together from 2001-02 at Bowling Green under Urban Meyer. The quartet then went to Utah and Florida before Mullen, Gonzales and Hevesy headed to Mississippi State. Now they're back at Florida.

RUNNING ON EMPTY The post-practice huddle was not the finish line for many Gators during spring drills. Much work remained for players who had skipped class, were late to a meeting or failed to meet their obligations. Mullen lined up the offenders on one sideline and made them sprint to other one during so-called "gassers." Interestingly, Mullen would run, too. He even showed up to speak to a student group in his sweaty workout clothes. "I'm part of the team, so I should run the gassers too," he says. "Hey, if we make mistakes, we're all going to pay the price."

EYE TO THE FUTURE Florida's lagging facilities were a focal point from Day 1 for McElwain. A new indoor practice facility was in place within a year. Now, Mullen will benefit further from McElwain's push to bring the Gators up to date with the nation's top programs. The school plans to break ground on a $65 million standalone football facility in late 2019. Mullen will be hands-on with planning and execution to ensure that Florida has the best digs in college football for years to come.

BIG GAME BLUES McElwain was 3–9 at Florida against ranked opponents, including a combined 0–6 against Alabama, Michigan and Florida State. Mullen will have to do much better in big games himself. At Mississippi State, he was 7–33 against ranked foes, including 2–16 against Alabama and LSU. In Mullen's defense, the Bulldogs' talent level routinely was inferior, an issue he should not face at Florida.



FELEIPE FRANKS

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.1	105
Defense	30.4	90
Margin	**-2.3**	**104**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	37.8%	113
Defense	37.6%	27
Margin	**+0.2%**	**68**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.2	100
Defense	5.7	73
Margin	**-0.5**	**93**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	49
Defense	4.2	42
Margin	**+0.4**	**37**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-5.2	112
Actual	-3	85
Margin	**+2.2**	**(42)**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

-2.3

Despite the efforts of punter Johnny Townsend, Florida's field-position game was dreadful in 2017. The combination of non-existent returns and lots of offensive three-and-outs produced an average field position margin of minus-2.3 yards per possession, 104th in FBS and last in the SEC. That was down from plus-2.1 per possession in 2016 (41st in FBS).

7.7

The Gators' defense was as good as ever at forcing third-and-longs: opponents' average third-down distance was 7.7 yards, 18th in FBS and first in the SEC. The UF offense faced the same situations, with an average third-down distance of 7.5 yards, 103rd in FBS and second-worst in the conference. That's a recipe for a lot of three-and-outs over 60 minutes.

55.2

How important was it for Florida's meager offense to stay on schedule? On scoring drives, the Gators had a 55.2 percent success rate on first downs and a 56.5 percent success rate on standard downs (first downs, second-and-7 or fewer, third-and-4 or fewer). On non-scoring drives, those averages were 30.3 percent and 34.7 percent, respectively.

14

Every new coaching hire can change your fortunes for better or worse. While Florida has put together 14 top-10 finishes in the last 28 seasons, 13 of them came from two of the best hires in modern college football history: Steve Spurrier (10 in 12 years) and Urban Meyer (three in six). Ron Zook, Will Muschamp and Jim McElwain: one in 10 years.

Layne Murdoch

2018 SIGNEES

When the dust settled following an 11th-hour scramble to sign his first Florida class, Dan Mullen was content to end the day No. 14 in the 247Sports Composite recruiting rankings.

Mullen needed a strong finish to get there, landing receiver Jacob Copeland, offensive tackle Richard Gouraige and defensive end Malik Langham — all four-star recruits — late on National Signing Day. American Heritage pass rusher Andrew Chatfield Jr., who picked UF over Miami and Florida State, was another big get on the final day.

Mullen puts little stock into rankings, but this year's did affirm that he and the new staff had done well piecing together an ever-challenging "transition class." Mullen expects the quality of future classes and rankings to only improve. "Hopefully, every year we have a better signing class than we had the year before," he says.

The Gators failed to sign a single top-10 class during former coach Jim McElwain's three seasons — unheard of previously at a school such as Florida. While Mullen could not end the streak, he did make significant headway.

The Gators' 2018 class features four top-100 recruits: Copeland (No. 69), Gouraige (81), quarterback Emory Jones (85) and wideout Justin Watkins (89). McElwain's 2017 class had one top-100 signee.

Florida did have some notable misses, including Tampa five-star offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere, who landed at Ohio State. Going forward, Mullen will need to land in-state talent of Petit-Frere's ilk.

The Gators now have not signed a five-star recruit since 2015. Yet beating Alabama and Tennessee for Copeland, an Under Armour All-American hailing from Florida's Panhandle, was among several big gets for the Gators. Ditto dragging Jones and fellow Under Armour All-American Trey Dean, a four-star defensive back, out of Georgia.

Mullen knows he has a lot of ground to make up. He says he spent more time on National Signing Day actually speaking with recruits for the 2019 class. "You're really kind of two years ahead in recruiting so there's some staffs that are probably a little bit ahead of us still having not been here very long," Mullen said in April. "But I think our guys are really working to catch up not just in the '19, but the '20 and then the '21 recruiting class."

BY POSITION	
Offensive Linemen	4
Defensive Backs	4
Wide Receivers	2
Tight Ends	2
Defensive Linemen	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Linebackers	1
Athletes	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Florida	10
Georgia	4
Alabama	2
Pennsylvania	2
New Jersey	1

Recruit Spotlight

EMORY JONES

QB • Lagrange, GA

Coach Dan Mullen did not have to wait anxiously to find his quarterback.

On Day 1 of college football's new signing period, Georgia high school star Emory Jones chose the Gators to answer potentially the biggest question facing the program.

The 6'2", 192-pound Jones chose Florida over Florida State and Ohio State, rewarding Mullen for a relationship that began when he was head coach at Mississippi State.

Mullen was the first coach to offer Jones a scholarship. Since then, Jones developed into one of the nation's top dual-threat quarterbacks and committed to Ohio State and coach Urban Meyer.

But Jones reconsidered his options when Mullen arrived at Florida and Florida State hired Willie Taggart. Each coach's spread offense suited Jones' abilities to run and pass.

To entice Jones, Mullen backed off UF's recruitment of top prospect Matt Corral, a pro-style QB from California who had committed to former coach Jim McElwain.

Jones visited both Gainesville and Tallahassee the weekend prior to signing. "The last couple of days have been kind of crazy," he said after choosing Florida.

Given the Gators' longstanding struggles under center, Jones, who enrolled in January and turned 18 in April, hoped to compete for the starting job. During the spring, Jones' running skills were evident, while his passing was wildly unpredictable.

Even so, expect to see Jones on the field at some point in the fall, with an eye on him becoming Florida's QB of the future.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Noah Banks	OT	6-7/305	Pensacola, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	21*
Chris Bleich	OT	6-6/305	Hanover Township, PA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	459
Amari Burney	S	6-1/215	Clearwater, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	178
Andrew Chatfield	DE	6-2/221	Plantation, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	213
Iverson Clement	ATH	5-11/199	Mount Holly, NJ	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	329
Jacob Copeland	WR	5-11/186	Pensacola, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	69
Trey Dean	S	6-2/180	Hampton, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	195
Richard Gouraige	OT	6-5/271	Tampa, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	81
John Huggins	S	6-0/200	Deltona, FL	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	420
Emory Jones	QB	6-2/192	LaGrange, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	85
Dante Lang	TE	6-5/222	Boca Raton, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	638
Malik Langham	DE	6-6/269	Huntsville, AL	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	315
Griffin McDowell	C	6-4/280	Leesburg, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,486
Evan McPherson	K	6-0/165	Fort Payne, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,491
Dameon Pierce	RB	5-11/208	Bainbridge, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	201
Kyle Pitts	TE	6-6/235	Abington, PA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	162
David Reese	OLB	6-1/213	Fort Pierce, FL	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	297
Randy Russell	DB	5-10/176	Opa Locka, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	343
Justin Watkins	WR	5-11/172	Clermont, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	89

*junior college transfer

GEORGIA BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 3 /// SEC East Prediction: 1

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Austin Peay
Sept. 8	at South Carolina
Sept. 15	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 22	at Missouri
Sept. 29	Tennessee
Oct. 6	Vanderbilt
Oct. 13	at LSU
Oct. 27	vs Florida #
Nov. 3	at Kentucky
Nov. 10	Auburn
Nov. 17	Massachusetts
Nov. 24	Georgia Tech

#Jacksonville, FL

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 12-1, 8-0 SEC

After just missing out on the program's first national championship since 1980, Georgia will be in the hunt to win it all once again. The early departure of linebacker Roquan Smith was a significant blow to a defense that limited opponents to 16.4 points per game. However, an experienced core remains intact, and help is coming from the nation's No. 1 recruiting class. QB Jake Fromm returns after a standout freshman season, but he could be pushed by five-star recruit Justin Fields. Regardless of who starts, Georgia's offense is poised to take a step forward. D'Andre Swift headlines a deep backfield, and the line is among the best in the nation. If the Bulldogs can avoid an unexpected loss, the matchup against Auburn might be the only obstacle to a 12–0 regular-season record.

Postseason: National Semifinal vs. Clemson

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Kirby Smart

RECORD AT SCHOOL
21–7 (2 years)

CAREER RECORD
21–7 (2 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Jim Chaney, James Coley

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Mel Tucker

LOCATION
Athens, GA

STADIUM
Sanford Stadium (92,746)

The Year 2 effect — a coach having a rough debut and then a fantastic sophomore season — added its latest example in Kirby Smart. Now the task is maintaining it.

And perhaps making one more play.

Georgia won an SEC championship and a Rose Bowl, and the Dawgs were one botched second-and-26 away from the school's first national football championship in nearly four decades. If Smart had pulled it off, he would have joined Bob Stoops, Urban Meyer, Jim Tressel and Gene Chizik as recent coaches to have won it all in their second year at their respective schools.



D'ANDRE SWIFT

Nick Saban came close in his second year at Alabama, then won it all in his third year, with Smart as his defensive coordinator. Mark Richt won a Sugar Bowl and finished No. 3 nationally in his second year at Georgia. But he couldn't crack through over the next 13 years, so Georgia turned to Smart.

There's every reason to expect that Smart will have Georgia contending for SEC and national championships for years to come. Recruiting has never been better, and administrative support is close to catching up to the rest of the SEC. (That indoor facility, the last in the SEC to be built, surely helped in 2017.)

Georgia has been trying to follow Saban's Alabama model — and the Dawgs did it extremely well last year. But can they follow it all the way and win a national title in Smart's third year?

QUARTERBACKS It's happened two years in a row. Georgia's starting quarterback the previous year (Greyson Lambert then Jacob Eason) started the season opener, and then a true freshman (Eason, then Jake Fromm) took over in Week 2 and went the rest of the way. And here we are again, as Georgia has a heralded freshman waiting in the wings — this time Justin Fields, whose blend of passing and running ability hasn't been seen at Georgia in some time. But it would be very tough to pull Fromm, who led Georgia to all those wins last year and possesses great leadership abilities. Fromm was much more than a game manager, averaging 9.0 yards per passing attempt, tied for second best in the SEC, and when the team needed a big pass play, he usually made it. Fromm was particularly strong on third downs last year. All that said, Smart wouldn't be afraid to go to Fields if he needed to, and Fields will not be redshirting: Georgia has only those two scholarship quarterbacks, so Fields will, at minimum, get his feet wet. He could do more than that, too.

RUNNING BACKS Georgia has long been prepared for the departures of Nick Chubb and Sony Michel. It was ready last year before the two made the surprising decisions to return. There's reason to believe that D'Andre Swift, the new starter, will be just as good as Chubb and Michel, after Swift managed to accrue 618 rushing yards despite being the third option last year. (He averaged 7.6 yards per carry and also had 17 catches for 153 yards.) The main questions for Georgia at tailback are whether Swift can be a work-

Fromm: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Swift: Paul Abell

horse and every-down back, and how deep the tailbacks will be behind him. Much of that depends on the health of Zamir White, a five-star freshman who tore his ACL late last year but was ahead of schedule this spring. Even if White isn't fully healthy, Georgia has four-star recruit James Cook, along with juniors Brian Herrien and Elijah Holyfield, who have waited awhile for their chance.

RECEIVERS Georgia believes that it has a solid top three wide receivers — senior Terry Godwin and juniors Riley Ridley and Mecole Hardman. Ridley was the leading receiver in the National Championship Game after stepping in for the injured Javon Wims. (Wims is the only key receiver the team loses.) Godwin and Hardman possess plenty of speed, and Godwin has a great ability to make the tough catches. Ridley can be good for intermediate throws, as well as downfield targets. What else do the Bulldogs have? Sophomore J.J. Holloman struggled with injuries last year but could crack his way into the starting lineup. There are other speedy options off the bench as well. Georgia has good numbers at wide receiver — but also at tight end, where Isaac Nauta heads a group that is high in hype but low in catches. If Georgia gets the tight ends involved more, Nauta (who had 29 catches as a freshman in 2016) could have a big year.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Georgia's offensive line was a weak point in 2015 and 2016, and then turned it around last year, which was a big reason the offense also turned things around. The upward momentum is widely expected to continue this season, with four starters returning and an influx of talent. But there is one reason to be wary: The one starter who's gone was the best one, Isaiah Wynn, and when he was at left tackle (including all of last year), Georgia was 19–2. Andrew Thomas, solid as a true freshman last year, shifts over from right tackle to left tackle. Lamont Gaillard, undersized but technically strong, returns as the starting center. The other three spots could be open for competition between returning veterans and elite recruits, including five-star guard Jamaree Salyer, five-star tackle Cade Mays and four-star guard Trey Hill. There's a lot of talent for offensive line coach Sam Pittman to sift through.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN There is some high-end talent back on Georgia's D-line, but there is also a reason for concern: depth. Like many teams these days, the Bulldogs like to rotate players in order to deal with the fast-paced offenses, and the last few years they've had six-to-eight quality defensive linemen. This year they return end Jonathan Ledbetter and tackle Tyler Clark. Both are potential All-SEC players, as are nose tackle Julian Rochester and end David Marshall. But recruiting hasn't been as strong along the line as elsewhere on defense, and the Bulldogs



QB JAKE FROMM

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY BULLDOGS

JAKE FROMM, QB Named the SEC Freshman of the Year after passing for 24 touchdowns and just seven interceptions while completing 62.2 percent of his passes.

TERRY GODWIN, WR The team's second-leading receiver for the third straight year; Godwin's one-handed touchdown catch at Notre Dame may have been the most important play of the season.

DEANDRE BAKER, CB Did not allow a touchdown all of last season, when he was named to the All-SEC second team.

RODRIGO BLANKENSHIP, K Made a 51-yarder in OT of the National Championship Game; was 20-for-23 on field goals and perfect on extra points.

D'ANDRE SWIFT, RB After becoming the third head in Georgia's three-headed tailback monster, Swift is set to step into a starring role.

KEY LOSSES

ROQUAN SMITH, ILB The consensus All-American led the team in tackles and sacks, and was a brilliant playmaker from sideline to sideline.

NICK CHUBB, RB Left Georgia as the second-leading rusher in school history, behind only Herschel Walker.

SONY MICHEL, RB Basically a co-starter; left as the third-leading rusher in school history and made some big plays in the passing game.

ISAIAH WYNN, OT Wynn played guard most of his first three seasons at Georgia, but when he moved to left tackle permanently as senior the offense took off.

JAVON WIMS, WR Wims emerged as the team's leading receiver as a senior, a sure-handed and tall target who made a number of key catches.

RISING STAR

Georgia just keeps bringing in potentially great tailbacks, and even after tearing his ACL late last year, **ZAMIR WHITE** could join those ranks as soon as this year. White wears the same No. 3 jersey that Todd Gurley sported, and he looks like him, too, in terms of size and athleticism.

are mildly worried about the quality of underclassmen along the line. They want Clark, Ledbetter and company to stay fresh during games and will need others to improve in order for that to happen.

LINEBACKERS Georgia lost all four starting linebackers from the Rose Bowl and National Championship Game, including one of the best defensive players in the country, Roquan Smith, who through his own sheer brilliance cleaned up a lot of mistakes. So how does Georgia replace all that? Well, it can't replace Smith, and it'll be hard to replace the leadership and experience of outside linebackers Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy. But the Bulldogs do have talent — and some experience — ready to step in. Natrez Patrick, a starting inside linebacker most of the past two years, is back with the team after missing the two Playoff games with off-field issues. He can anchor the middle of the field for Georgia. The other inside linebacker spot will likely be a committee. The outside linebacker spots will start with senior D'Andre Walker, who in limited duty was still second in sacks for Georgia last year, and sophomore Walter Grant, who has drawn comparisons to Leonard Floyd.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)					
WR	5	**Terry Godwin (Sr.)**	87	Tyler Simmons (Jr.)	
WR	4	Mecole Hardman (Jr.)	25	Ahkil Crumpton (Sr.)	
WR	8	**Riley Ridley (Jr.)**	9	Jeremiah Holloman (So.)	
LT	71	**Andrew Thomas (So.)**	78	D'Marcus Hayes (Jr.)	
LG	65	**Kendall Baker (Sr.)**		Jamaree Salyer (Fr.)	
C	53	**Lamont Gaillard (Sr.)**	50	Warren Ericson (Fr.)	
RG	74	Ben Cleveland (So.)	66	**Solomon Kindley (So.)**	
RT	79	Isaiah Wilson (Fr.)	77	Cade Mays (Fr.)	
TE	18	**Isaac Nauta (Jr.)**	89	Charlie Woerner (Jr.)	
QB	11	**Jake Fromm (So.)**	1	Justin Fields (Fr.)	
RB	7	D'Andre Swift (So.)	13	Elijah Holyfield (Jr.)	
DEFENSE (5)					
DE	13	**Jonathan Ledbetter (Sr.)**	51	David Marshall (Jr.)	
DT	52	**Tyler Clark (Jr.)**	76	Michail Carter (Jr.)	
NT	5	Julian Rochester (Jr.)	96	DaQuan Hawkins-Muckle (Sr.)	
OLB	84	Walter Grant (So.)	1	Brenton Cox (Fr.)	
ILB	6	**Natrez Patrick (Sr.)**	30	Tae Crowder (Jr.)	
ILB	32	Monty Rice (So.)	44	Juwan Taylor (Sr.)	
OLB	15	D'Andre Walker (Sr.)	33	Robert Beal (Fr.)	
CB	18	**Deandre Baker (Sr.)**	23	Mark Webb (So.)	
CB	26	Tyrique McGhee (Jr.)		Tyson Campbell (Fr.)	
FS	2	Richard LeCounte (So.)	12	Tray Bishop (Fr.)	
SS	20	**J.R. Reed (Jr.)**	19	Jarvis Wilson (Sr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	98	Rodrigo Blankenship (Jr.)	**KR**	4 Mecole Hardman (Jr.)	
P		Jake Camarda (Fr.)	**PR**	4 Mecole Hardman (Jr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS There will be big concerns here in 2018. But there's also a chance for the secondary to be pretty good. Cornerback Deandre Baker, who didn't allow a touchdown all of last season, elected to return rather than enter the NFL Draft, as did safety J.R. Reed, who came out of nowhere to emerge as a solid all-around player. The other safety spot could be capably manned by sophomore Richard LeCounte, who got some playing time last year. The cornerback and nickel spots will thus be key, especially with two good quarterbacks (South Carolina's Jake Bentley and Missouri's Drew Lock) on the schedule in September. Baker's side of the field should be fine, but Georgia's ability to handle passes to the other side will be in question. Five-star freshman cornerback Tyson Campbell could be thrust into action immediately.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Rodrigo Blankenship went from cult hero to legitimately great kicker last year, booting two huge field goals in the postseason (the 55-yarder at the end of the first half of the Rose Bowl and the 51-yarder in overtime of the championship). He's now a junior and will try to become an All-American. The main returner should be Hardman, who didn't have a return TD last year but always seemed on the verge of breaking one. Punter could be a concern: Cam Nizialek is gone after his stupendous graduate transfer season and will replaced either by freshman Jake Camarda or sophomore Marshall Long, who struggled as a freshman and was injured last year.

Paul Abell

2018 GEORGIA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
22	Bennett, Stetson	6-0/172	Fr.	Blackshear, GA
1	Fields, Justin	6-3/225	Fr.	Kennesaw, GA
11	Fromm, Jake	6-2/225	So.	Warner Robins, GA
	Kerut, Christian	6-3/215	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
16	Seter, John	6-3/180	Fr.	Hampton, GA
4	Vaughn, Sam	6-3/204	Sr.	Fort Pierce, FL

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
33	Donald-McIntyre, Ian	5-10/207	So.	Fayetteville, GA
	Dufrene, Christian	6-0/218	Jr.	Auburn, GA
35	Herrien, Brian	6-0/210	Jr.	Douglasville, GA
13	Holyfield, Elijah	5-11/215	Jr.	College Park, GA
24	Hudson, Prather	5-11/200	So.	Columbus, GA
	Levell, Kyle	6-2/205	So.	Sandy Springs, GA
43	Moore, Nick	6-3/250	Sr.	Snellville, GA
46	Sinkwich IV, Frank	5-11/230	Fr.	Athens, GA
7	Swift, D'Andre	5-9/215	So.	Philadelphia, PA
29	Tidwell, Lofton	5-11/210	Fr.	Douglasville, GA
	Vaught, Bender	5-11/190	Jr.	Ashland, VA
	White, Zamir	6-0/210	Fr.	Laurinburg, NC

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
14	Blount, Trey	6-2/200	So.	Atlanta, GA
	Bond, Patrick	5-10/180	Fr.	Milton, GA
26	Burke, Patrick	6-3/197	So.	Marietta, GA
82	Chigbu, Michael	6-2/213	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
16	Crumpton, Ahkil	5-9/175	Sr.	Philadelphia, PA
80	Dooley, J.T.	6-1/184	Fr.	Dallas, TX
19	Erdman, Willie	5-10/191	So.	Merritt Island, FL
30	Ferguson, Ed	6-2/200	Fr.	Athens, GA
	Fowler, Trenton	5-9/175	Fr.	Duluth, GA
5	Godwin, Terry	5-11/185	Sr.	Hogansville, GA
4	Hardman, Mecole	5-11/183	Jr.	Bowman, GA
9	Holloman, Jeremiah	6-2/200	So.	Covington, GA
	Hull, Joseph	5-10/170	Jr.	Buford, GA
	Jackson, Kearis	6-0/200	Fr.	Fort Valley, GA
15	Landers, Matt	6-5/200	Fr.	Pinellas, FL
17	Moran, Josh	6-2/193	So.	Alpharetta, GA
84	Payne, Wyatt	6-1/181	Jr.	Dublin, GA
8	Ridley, Riley	6-2/200	Jr.	Coconut Creek, FL
23	Roberson, Caleeb	6-1/180	So.	Waynesboro, GA
87	Simmons, Tyler	6-0/201	Jr.	Powder Springs, GA
2	Stanley, Jayson	6-2/207	Sr.	Fairburn, GA
	Tulowitzky, Reid	5-10/175	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
25	Van Tiflin, Steven	6-1/207	Sr.	Saginaw, MI

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
	Arnold, Evan	6-6/250	Jr.	Marietta, GA
88	Harris, Jackson	6-6/250	Sr.	Columbia, TN
18	Nauta, Isaac	6-4/240	Jr.	Buford, GA
86	Patton, Wix	6-6/241	Fr.	Peachtree City, GA
	Werntz, Mitchell	6-4/220	Fr.	Brookhaven, GA
89	Woerner, Charlie	6-5/245	Jr.	Tiger, GA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
58	Allen, Pat	6-4/305	Jr.	Reisterstown, MD
65	Baker, Kendall	6-6/305	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
61	Barnes, Chris	6-3/288	So.	Leesburg, GA
74	Cleveland, Ben	6-6/340	So.	Toccoa, GA
50	Ericson, Warren	6-4/315	Fr.	Suwanee, GA
68	Fogarty, Sean	6-4/295	Sr.	Savannah, GA
53	Gaillard, Lamont	6-2/308	Sr.	Fayetteville, NC
57	Gothard, Daniel	6-6/327	So.	Dunwoody, GA
78	Hayes, D'Marcus	6-5/315	Jr.	Madison, MS
	Hill, Trey	6-4/330	Fr.	Warner Robins, GA
72	Johnson, Netori	6-4/325	Fr.	Ellenwood, GA
66	Kindley, Solomon	6-4/330	So.	Jacksonville, FL
67	Madden, Sam	6-6/334	Jr.	Barnegat, NJ
77	Mays, Cade	6-6/318	Fr.	Knoxville, TN
54	Shaffer, Justin	6-4/335	So.	Ellenwood, GA
71	Thomas, Andrew	6-5/320	So.	Lithonia, GA
79	Wilson, Isaiah	6-7/345	Fr.	Brooklyn, NY

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
94	Barnett, Michael	6-4/304	Jr.	Dorchester, SC
76	Carter, Michail	6-3/295	Jr.	Jackson, GA
52	Clark, Tyler	6-4/300	Jr.	Americus, GA
96	Hawkins-Muckle, DaQuan	6-4/310	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
10	Herring, Malik	6-3/280	So.	Forsyth, GA
13	Ledbetter, Jonathan	6-4/277	Sr.	Tucker, GA
51	Marshall, David	6-3/274	Jr.	Thomaston, GA
	Poole, Antonio	6-2/333	Jr.	Milledgeville, GA
49	Pyrz, Koby	6-2/282	So.	Cairo, GA
5	Rochester, Julian	6-5/300	Jr.	Powder Springs, GA
	Wyatt, Devonte	6-3/301	So.	Decatur, GA
91	Wyatt, Kolby	6-4/215	Fr.	Snellville, GA
92	Young, Justin	6-4/275	Jr.	Loganville, GA

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
33	Beal Jr., Robert	6-4/244	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA
11	Brown, Keyon	6-3/240	Sr.	Wauchula, FL
1	Cox, Brenton	6-4/250	Fr.	Stockbridge, GA
30	Crowder, Tae	6-3/235	Jr.	Hamilton, GA
	Eager, John	6-0/200	Jr.	Valdosta, GA
84	Grant, Walter	6-4/245	So.	Cairo, GA
88	Hunter, Jaden	6-2/228	So.	Atlanta, GA
25	Laguins, Jaleel	6-2/230	So.	Watkinsville, GA
22	McBride, Nate	6-2/223	So.	Lyons, GA
6	Patrick, Natrez	6-3/242	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
32	Rice, Monty	6-1/235	So.	Madison, AL
44	Taylor, Juwan	6-1/218	Sr.	Hollywood, FL
15	Walker, D'Andre	6-3/245	Sr.	Fairburn, GA

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
18	Baker, Deandre	5-11/185	Sr.	Miami, FL
12	Bishop, Tray	6-3/210	Fr.	Dawson, GA
36	Brini, Latavious	6-2/205	Fr.	Miami Gardens, FL
8	Gibbs, Deangelo	6-1/205	So.	Oxford, GA
	Jackson, Darius	5-9/184	Fr.	Sandersville, GA
2	LeCounte, Richard	5-11/185	So.	Riceboro, GA
26	McGhee, Tyrique	5-10/187	Jr.	Byron, GA
37	McKinney, Jordon	6-0/187	So.	Dalton, GA
43	Mize, Isaac	6-0/185	Sr.	Gainesville, GA
	Moore, Cameron	5-10/170	Fr.	Alpharetta, GA
	Nelson II, Hugh	6-2/198	Fr.	Powder Springs, GA
31	Poole, William	6-0/190	So.	Atlanta, GA
20	Reed, J.R.	6-1/194	Jr.	Frisco, TX
42	Skole, Jake	6-2/215	Fr.	Roswell, GA
28	Smith, KJ	5-11/172	Jr.	Perry, GA
9	Speed, Ameer	6-3/211	So.	Jacksonville, FL
41	Stokes, Eric	6-1/185	Fr.	Covington, GA
23	Webb, Mark	6-1/200	So.	Philadelphia, PA
	Wilson, Divaad	6-0/195	Fr.	Miami, FL
19	Wilson, Jarvis	6-2/199	Sr.	Tupelo, MS
46	Wing, Andrew	6-0/185	Fr.	Mobile, AL

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
98	Blankenship, Rodrigo (K)	6-1/191	Jr.	Marietta, GA
97	Buce, Brooks (K)	6-0/175	Fr.	Norcross, GA
	D'Angola, Michael (P)	6-2/196	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
95	Long, Marshall (P)	6-2/217	So.	China Grove, NC
	Morgan, Oren (LS)	6-0/190	Fr.	Lyons, GA
93	Rubright, Bill (P)	6-3/182	Fr.	Atlanta, GA

SCOUTING THE BULLDOGS

Opposing Coaches Size up Georgia

"They took a huge leap last year. When they came on the field, you could tell that their bodies had changed from 2016 to 2017 — also their mindset and their confidence. When they walked on the field, they just looked like a championship football team. I don't know that I've ever seen a team make the strides from one year to the next that Georgia did. I don't think that was a fluke by any stretch. The East is somewhat down, but for them to be as dominant as they were for most of the year, that was very impressive. ... I think Jake Fromm is a baller. I don't know what 'it' is, but he's got it. All year, he heard from everyone, 'They are just running the ball. When they get into a real game, he won't be able to pass.' Well, to the best of my observation, every time he was asked to do it, he stepped up, whether it was the SEC Championship Game or three quarters of the National Championship Game, he played very, very well. ... I think it will be interesting this year, with what Fromm did last year, and then them bringing in Justin Fields, because some people believe Fields is a once-in-a-generation talent. I think that will be an interesting competition to watch in camp. ... They could run five running backs out there last year that could have started on most SEC teams. ... They are going to run away with the East. Nobody is close to them right now."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-2, 7-1 SEC

Sept. 2	Appalachian State	W	31-10
Sept. 9	at Notre Dame	W	20-19
Sept. 16	Samford	W	42-14
Sept. 23	Mississippi State	W	31-3
Sept. 30	at Tennessee	W	41-0
Oct. 7	at Vanderbilt	W	45-14
Oct. 14	Missouri	W	53-28
Oct. 28	vs. Florida #	W	42-7
Nov. 4	South Carolina	W	24-10
Nov. 11	at Auburn	L	17-40
Nov. 18	Kentucky	W	42-13
Nov. 25	at Georgia Tech	W	38-7
Dec. 2	vs. Auburn %	W	28-7
Jan. 1	vs. Oklahoma & (ot)	W	54-48
Jan. 8	vs. Alabama $ (ot)	L	23-26

#Jacksonville %Atlanta &Rose Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal $CFB Playoff Championship



J.R. REED

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jake Fromm	291	181	2,615	24	7
RUSHING	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Nick Chubb	223	1,345	6.0	15	
Sony Michel	156	1,227	7.9	16	
D'Andre Swift	81	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	
Elijah Holyfield	50	293	5.9	2	
RECEIVING	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Javon Wims	45	720	16.0	7	
Terry Godwin	38	639	16.8	6	
Mecole Hardman	25	418	16.7	4	
D'Andre Swift	17	153	9.0	1	
Riley Ridley	14	218	15.6	2	

KICKING: Rodrigo Blankenship, 20-23 FGs, 63-63 PATs, 123 points

TACKLES: Roquan Smith, 137; J.R. Reed, 79

SACKS: Roquan Smith, 6.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Dominick Sanders, 4

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	35.4 ppg	3	20
Rushing	258.4 ypg	1	9
Passing	176.9 ypg	12	106
Total	435.3 ypg	5	32
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	16.4 ppg	2	6
Rushing	126.0 ypg	2	20
Passing	168.9 ypg	3	8
Total	294.9 ypg	2	6
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.27	4	44

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

CULTURE CHANGE Georgia players talked during Kirby Smart's first year about the culture being changed but didn't point to many specifics. Last year it was more evident, and the players outlined how things had changed — harder practices, which made games easier. Such a change was difficult in Smart's first season, for a number of reasons: Players still needed to buy in to a new coaching staff, the team wasn't at a full 85 scholarships, and there was a lack of an indoor facility. That all changed.

AVOIDING INJURY Another secret to Georgia's success has been how healthy it's been the past two seasons. There were no key season-ending injuries last season, and many credit strength and conditioning coordinator Scott Sinclair and his staff. So is Sinclair's system that good, or has it just been a two-year run of good luck?

NEW ROLES Something to watch with Georgia's offense this season is how the quarterbacks and wide receivers fare under new management — sort of. James Coley, who had been the receivers coach the past two years, has moved over to quarterbacks, which he had coached earlier in his career. The move was made partly as an inducement to keep Coley after Texas A&M offered him its offensive coordinator job. Replacing Coley as receivers coach is Cortez Hankton, hired away from the same spot at Vanderbilt. While Coley does have extensive experience coaching quarterbacks, it will be interesting to see how he affects Fromm's development.

TARGETING THE TIGHT ENDS Georgia's usage of the tight ends has gradually decreased, even as the talent in the tight end room has stayed the same or gotten even better. There are a number of theories as to why, but there's also a theory on why the tight ends could see more passes this season: Chaney, who had been the quarterbacks coach, is now the tight ends coach. Two of the tight ends, Isaac Nauta and Charlie Woerner, expressed happiness about their position coach now being the play caller, too.

MOVING ON Smart tried to turn the page from the painful ending of the National Championship Game as quickly as possible. But his players, while generally echoing the need not to dwell on it, have still been pretty candid about how much it still bothered them. Terry Godwin put it this way: "To be honest, me personally, I'm not over it. Because it's something I dream about every night," he says. "One play. We work so hard and got there, and we came up one play short. That hurt me tremendously to see our seniors sit there and cry and just weep. That was very hard. That was tough."

THE OTHER QUARTERBACKS? Georgia enters the season with just two scholarship quarterbacks. The No. 3 is likely to be redshirt freshman Stetson Bennett, who is generously listed at 6'0" but is very fast. Another option would be Mecole Hardman, the receiver who is already proficient in the Wildcat and played quarterback in high school.



ELIJAH HOLYFIELD

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.5	25
Defense	27.9	25
Margin	**+3.6**	**24**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.4%	22
Defense	35.6%	13
Margin	**+9.8%**	**12**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.7	12
Defense	4.7	10
Margin	**+2.0**	**4**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.3	6
Defense	4.1	32
Margin	**+1.2**	**11**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.9	37
Actual	+4	37
Margin	**+1.1**	**57**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

5.3

Georgia went from averaging 3.8 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40) to 5.3 in 2017, the largest improvement in the country. Meanwhile, the defense went from allowing 4.8 points per opportunity to 4.1, the 18th-largest improvement. Opponents had to create five opportunities to match what Georgia could produce in four.

+2.0

UGA's improvement didn't wait until the red zone to announce itself: The Dawgs' per-play yardage margin improved from plus-0.18 (5.44 on offense, 5.26 on defense) to plus-2.0 (6.7, 4.7) in 2017. Only FAU, Fresno State and Marshall improved their margins by a greater amount, and they were all terrible in 2016 (and therefore had more room to grow).

71

Georgia was the most run-heavy team in the SEC, rushing 71 percent of the time on standard downs (first downs, second-and-7 or fewer, third-and-4 or fewer) and 40 percent of the time on passing downs. That was most and second most in the league, respectively. What happens now that Sony Michel and Nick Chubb are gone?

22

Georgia enjoys coming out of nowhere. The Dawgs have 22 AP top-10 finishes in their history, but in only five of those 22 seasons did they start the year in the top 10. Seven times, they began unranked. On the flipside, they've begun the year in the top 10 and finished it unranked four times, twice this decade.

AP/Wade Payne

2018 SIGNEES

When Georgia hired Kirby Smart, it hoped to tap into the Nick Saban model by getting someone who had seen what it took to build a winner. That meant coaching, but it also meant recruiting. Smart hasn't disappointed.

After reeling in the nation's third-ranked class in his first full recruiting cycle, Smart used his second full cycle to sign the consensus top class in the nation. There were an astounding seven five-stars, including two on the offensive line, a quarterback, a tailback and two more elite names for the back end of the defense.

Justin Fields was the biggest name, the quarterback who flipped from Penn State, and he'll give Georgia a great dual-threat option at some point. He was an in-state recruit, as were 15 of the team's 26 signees, as Georgia nearly ran the table on in-state recruits that it wanted. It signed five of the top six players in the state, per the 247Sports Composite rankings.

But Smart and his staff also went outside the state to get elite talent: Zamir White (Laurinburg, N.C.) is just the latest ballyhooed tailback to arrive on campus. Five-star offensive tackle Cade Mays grew up in the shadow of another SEC East team, in Knoxville, Tenn., and yet Georgia pulled him out of East Tennessee. The Bulldogs also nabbed potential future starters out of South Carolina (inside linebacker Channing Tindall), South Florida (cornerback Divaad Wilson) and even Illinois (tight end Luke Ford).

It's a deep and talented class, where even the second-best tailback (James Cook) would have been the crown jewel of a lot of team's classes.

Saban built Alabama along the lines, and Georgia could be doing that with this class: Mays, guard Trey Hill and center Warren Ericson all enrolled early and were already in the two-deep in spring, and guard Jamaree Salyer should also push for playing time when he arrives.

BY POSITION	
Offensive Linemen	5
Defensive Linemen	5
Linebackers	4
Cornerbacks	4
Running Backs	2
Wide Receivers	2
Tight Ends	2
Quarterbacks	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Georgia	15
Florida	4
North Carolina	2
Illinois	1
Oklahoma	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1

Recruit Spotlight

Justin Fields

QB • Kennesaw, GA

On the day that Justin Fields signed with Georgia, Kirby Smart was asked why he had pursued a quarterback so hard despite already having a freshman quarterback who had led the team to an SEC championship and the College Football Playoff. "Because," Smart said, "You never know."

Georgia learned that last year, when former five-star quarterback Jacob Eason went down with a knee injury, and Jake Fromm played so well in his stead that he remained the starter. But with Fields, the catalyst may not be an injury to Fromm. It could be that Fields is too good not to play.

Fields has the physical attributes (6'3" and 225 pounds), the recruiting accolades (five-star recruit, No. 2 overall prospect in the nation per 247Sports Composite) and the dual-threat factor, which Georgia hasn't had in a long time.

Smart was impressed with Fields' arm talent and intelligence while watching him at The Opening, a recruiting event featuring some of the nation's top players. "He made throws and he did it all while keeping a calm, cool presence that is kind of unmatched," Smart says.

Fields' new teammates noticed it as soon as he arrived. "Justin, he's carrying himself very well. He looks mature," receiver Terry Godwin says. "He's a solid body. Just walking around, you'd never know he was a freshman because he's a big guy. He's very quiet, and he's very humble as well."

It will make for a fascinating situation going forward: The experienced and well-liked Fromm against Fields, the kid who may be too good not to play. How will it turn out? You never know.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Adam Anderson	OLB	6-5/225	Rome, GA	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	18
Tommy Bush	WR	6-5/191	Schertz, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	196
Jake Camarda	P	6-2/175	Norcross, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,369
Tyson Campbell	CB	6-3/180	Plantation, FL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	12
Owen Condon	OT	6-7/315	Oklahoma City, OK	★★★	★★★	★★★	447
James Cook	RB	6-0/184	Miami, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	41
Brenton Cox	DE	6-4/250	Stockbridge, GA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	23
Jordan Davis	DT	6-6/330	Charlotte, NC	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	425
Warren Ericson	C	6-4/315	Suwanee, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	263
Justin Fields	QB	6-3/225	Kennesaw, GA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2
John FitzPatrick	TE	6-6/230	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	316
Luke Ford	TE	6-6/252	Carterville, IL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	51
Trey Hill	OG	6-4/330	Warner Robins, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
Kearis Jackson	WR	6-0/203	Fort Valley, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	130
Nadab Joseph	CB	6-0/180	Miami, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	175
Cade Mays	OT	6-6/318	Knoxville, TN	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	22
Azeez Ojulari	DE	6-4/224	Marietta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	144
Otis Reese	OLB	6-4/206	Leesburg, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	87
Jamaree Salyer	OG	6-4/342	Atlanta, GA	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	10
Chris Smith	CB	5-11/175	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	306
Channing Tindall	ILB	6-2/218	Columbia, SC	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	103
Quay Walker	OLB	6-4/235	Cordele, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	31
Tramel Walthour	DT	6-4/270	Hinesville, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	631
Zamir White	RB	6-0/210	Laurinburg, NC	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	9
Divaad Wilson	CB	6-0/180	Miami, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	242
Devonte Wyatt	DT	6-3/301	Decatur, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	5*

*junior college transfer

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

National Forecast: 55 /// SEC East Prediction: 5

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Central Michigan
Sept. 8	at Florida
Sept. 15	Murray State
Sept. 22	Mississippi State
Sept. 29	South Carolina
Oct. 6	at Texas A&M
Oct. 20	Vanderbilt
Oct. 27	at Missouri
Nov. 3	Georgia
Nov. 10	at Tennessee
Nov. 17	Middle Tennessee
Nov. 24	at Louisville

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 6-6, 3-5 SEC

Kentucky was two plays away — against Florida and Ole Miss — from winning six SEC games in 2017. That's the good news. The bad news: The Wildcats were outgained by nearly 75 yards per game in league play and lost four of their final five games overall. Even worse news: UK enters the season without a QB on its roster who has taken a D-I snap. The hope in Lexington is that Terry Wilson, a former Oregon Duck, can replicate the production of departed QB Stephen Johnson and that Benny Snell can continue his assault on the school's rushing records. Still, there are concerns at wide receiver, where no returning player caught more than 30 passes last year. The defense, with eight starters back, should be improved. If the Cats get solid QB play, it's safe to pencil in at least six wins and a return to a bowl.

Postseason: Liberty Bowl vs. Oklahoma State

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Mark Stoops

RECORD AT SCHOOL
26-36 (5 years)

CAREER RECORD
26-36 (5 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Eddie Gran, Darin Hinshaw

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Matt House

LOCATION
Lexington, KY

STADIUM
Kroger Field (61,000)

After consecutive 7–6 seasons, Mark Stoops' Kentucky football program faces an intriguing case study in 2018.



JOSH ALLEN

Has the rebuilding project already reached its peak with the Wildcats striving for .500 records in Southeastern Conference play and mid-tier bowl games, or is the potential there for the program to take the next step and contend in the SEC East? With Kentucky returning eight starters on defense, including at least two players who could have been picked in the NFL Draft as juniors had they left Lexington, and star running back Benny Snell back for his junior season on offense, the 2018 roster could be Kentucky's best-equipped bunch to break through the seven-or-eight-win plateau in some time.

Of course, a gap remains between even an experienced Kentucky roster and the top teams in the SEC. And the Wildcats still have several questions of their own to answer.

QUARTERBACKS All of Kentucky's experience on defense and returning talent at several skill positions on offense will matter little if the Wildcats cannot find a competent quarterback in time for the 2018 season. No quarterback on the roster has ever played in an FBS football game. Former Oregon Duck Terry Wilson, the No. 1 junior college quarterback transfer in the 2018 class according to ESPN, and sophomore Gunnar Hoak ended the spring as the leaders for the starting job. Hoak, a more traditional pro-style quarterback, has the benefit of two years with the playbook even though he has yet to make his collegiate debut. Wilson might be the better fit for the Wildcats' read-option offense thanks to his running ability. Redshirt freshmen Danny Clark and Walker Wood are other options should Hoak and Wilson struggle. "I think we have some guys that can create some opportunity in the pass game, and I've been impressed with the quarterbacks and just their talent, their arm talent and the way they throw the ball and their poise, and they have worked really hard," Stoops says. "I feel good about it."

RUNNING BACKS Will 2018 be Snell's final season at Kentucky? He will be eligible to enter the NFL Draft in 2019 and has already staged an assault on the program's record book through two seasons in Lexington. The first player in program history to rush for at least 1,000 yards in consecutive seasons, Snell needs 1,412 yards to become Kentucky's all-time leading rusher. He already holds the program's career rushing touchdowns record. Kentucky made it through the 2017 season with two running backs accounting for 96 percent of the carries from the position. It seems unlikely the team could make it through another season without needing backs further down the depth chart to contribute at some point. In that case, senior Sihiem King, who served as Snell's primary backup last season, and sophomore A.J. Rose will need to step up. At least one of the 2018 running back signees could play as well.

RECEIVERS Leading receiver Garrett Johnson is gone, but senior Dorian Baker, the team's leading pass catcher in 2015, is set to return from an ankle injury that cost him all

Snell: Tim Umphrey; Allen: Paul Abell

of last season. Junior Tavin Richardson came on strong down the stretch with at least three catches in each of the final three games, including five for 89 yards in the Music City Bowl. Sophomore Lynn Bowden looked like a future star in his debut season, but he is still relatively new to the wide receiver position and finished his freshman year with just 17 catches and no touchdowns. For the passing game to improve, Kentucky will need at least a couple of the second-year receivers, including Bowden, Isaiah Epps, Josh Ali and Clevan Thomas, to make significant strides. Epps, Ali and Thomas combined for just eight catches as freshmen, but Epps and Ali represent the team's best speed threats down the field. Those players are in danger of being passed by the one or more of the receivers UK signed in its 2018 class should they not improve before the season. A foot injury ended tight end C.J. Conrad's 2017 season two games early and derailed any thoughts of him forgoing his senior season to enter the NFL Draft. A subsequent shoulder surgery kept Conrad out of spring practice, but he should be one of the best in the league at the position when healthy. With lingering questions about wide receiver depth, the tight end could see an expanded role in the passing game in the fall as well. Freshmen Brenden Bates and Keaton Upshaw will compete with junior Justin Rigg — who missed most of spring practice with the second injury to an internal organ of his career — for the No. 2 tight end job in the fall.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The emergence of center Drake Jackson midway through the season seemed to stabilize an offensive line that had struggled to duplicate its 2016 success early in 2017. Jackson taking over the starting center job allowed Bunchy Stallings to move back to right guard, where he shined in 2016. Now Kentucky returns four of five starters on the line with former five-star recruit Landon Young, a part-time starter last season, expected to take over the No. 1 left tackle spot vacated by the departed Kyle Meadows. The experience should allow coaches to bring a group of three redshirt freshmen along slowly. USC transfer E.J. Price, a former four-star recruit, could factor in the rotation at tackle, though he bizarrely ripped UK coaches online and tweeted he was leaving the team after one spring practice only to return to the practice field two days later.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Kentucky moved sophomore edge rusher Josh Paschal from outside linebacker to defensive end this spring in order to fit its best 11 players on the field at the same time. That move should add pass-rushing ability to a defensive line that totaled just five sacks in 2017 and increase competition at the interior line positions in UK's base 3-4 defense. Nose guard Quinton Bohanna took over the starting job for the final five games of his fresh-



RB **BENNY SNELL**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY WILDCATS

BENNY SNELL, RB The first player in program history to rush for at least 1,000 yards in consecutive seasons. Was one of three players in the SEC to average at least 100 rushing yards per game last season.

MIKE EDWARDS, S Elected to return to Kentucky for senior season after leading all SEC defensive backs in tackles in each of the last two seasons.

C.J. CONRAD, TE A foot injury ended his 2017 season early but could be one of the top tight ends in 2019 draft class.

JOSH ALLEN, OLB Dynamic pass rusher was mentioned as a possible first-round draft pick midway through 2017 season but instead returned to school.

JORDAN JONES, LB Injuries and off-field drama derailed 2017, but he can be highly productive — and he showed during his sophomore season.

KEY LOSSES

STEPHEN JOHNSON, QB Toughness and leadership were key in Kentucky's 14 wins over the last two seasons.

GARRETT JOHNSON, WR The fourth player in program history to record at least 2,000 career receiving yards led Kentucky in catches (48) and receiving yards (539) in 2017.

KYLE MEADOWS, OT Started 35 consecutive games to finish his career, including all 13 in 2017.

COURTNEY LOVE, LB A team captain who started every game at middle linebacker in his two seasons at UK.

AUSTIN MACGINNIS, K The best kicker in program history ended his career with Kentucky records for career points scored (359), career field goals (72) and longest field goal (54 yards).

RISING STAR

Kentucky may not name a starting quarterback until just before the season opener, but junior college transfer **TERRY WILSON** has the credentials to be a star at the position should he win the job. Best-case scenario for UK and Wilson is he becomes a more successful version of Stephen Johnson as a dual-threat weapon.

man season and looks like a player to build around moving forward. Senior Adrian Middleton has started 25 consecutive games but should be pushed by a group that includes juniors T.J. Carter, Phil Hoskins and Calvin Taylor. The defensive line has been a weak point even as Kentucky reached consecutive bowl games, but there's enough depth to hope 2018 might be the best season yet for the group in the Stoops era.

LINEBACKERS Kentucky was able to move Paschal to the defensive line thanks to outside linebackers Josh Allen and Denzil Ware choosing to return to school for their senior season. Allen was mentioned as a possible first-round NFL pick midway through 2017 but totaled just one-half sack in his final seven games. Kentucky hired former Indianapolis Colts linebackers coach Brad White in the offseason, and his NFL experience seems well suited to help UK's senior duo take the next step. Ware was suspended for UK's bowl game for a violation of team rules but returned for the spring. Junior Kash Daniel, who played mostly on special teams the last two seasons, is poised to take over the starting Mike linebacker spot from the graduated Courtney Love. He will play alongside senior Will linebacker Jordan Jones, who lost four games to injury last season and was embarrassed by multiple off-field incidents. Still, Jones is just a year removed from totaling 109 tackles and 15.5 tackles for a loss as a sophomore. Depth is a question at inside linebacker with two redshirt freshmen and two true freshmen expected to compete for backup jobs.



Paul Abell

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)				
WR	2	Dorian Baker (Sr.)	82	Josh Ali (So.)
WR	1	Lynn Bowden (So.)	18	Clevan Thomas (So.)
WR	11	**Tavin Richardson (Jr.)**	81	Isaiah Epps (So.)
LT	67	Landon Young (Jr.)	72	E.J. Price (So.)
LG	71	**Logan Stenberg (Jr.)**	79	Luke Fortner (So.)
C	52	**Drake Jackson (So.)**	65	Bunchy Stallings (Sr.)
RG	65	**Bunchy Stallings (Sr.)**	77	Mason Wolfe (Jr.)
RT	64	**George Asafo-Adjei (Sr.)**	66	Naasir Watkins (Fr.)
TE	87	**C.J. Conrad (Sr.)**	83	Justin Rigg (Jr.)
QB	3	Terry Wilson (So.)	12	Gunnar Hoak (So.)
RB	26	**Benny Snell (Jr.)**	22	Sihiem King (Sr.)
DEFENSE (8)				
DE	99	**Adrian Middleton (Sr.)**	92	Phil Hoskins (Jr.)
NG	95	Quinton Bohanna (So.)	98	Tymere Dubose (Sr.)
DE	4	Josh Paschal (So.)	90	**T.J. Carter (Jr.)**
OLB	35	Denzil Ware (Sr.)	20	Kengera Daniel (Sr.)
MLB	56	Kash Daniel (Jr.)		Christopher Oats (Fr.)
WLB	34	**Jordan Jones (Sr.)**	44	Jamin Davis (Fr.)
SLB	41	**Josh Allen (Sr.)**	31	Boogie Watson (So.)
CB	8	**Derrick Baity (Sr.)**	6	Lonnie Johnson (Sr.)
CB	21	**Chris Westry (Sr.)**	3	Jordan Griffin (Jr.)
S	7	**Mike Edwards (Sr.)**	17	Tobias Gilliam (So.)
S	25	**Darius West (Sr.)**	9	Davonte Robinson (So.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K		Chance Poore (Fr.)	**KR**	1 Lynn Bowden (So.)
P	93	Max Duffy (So.)	**PR**	1 Lynn Bowden (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS Kentucky's veteran secondary has yet to fulfill the hype that had Stoops call the group "superstars in the making" after their freshman season, but the four seniors who garnered that praise after their 2015 debut have one more year to prove themselves. Safety Mike Edwards has more than carried his own, leading all SEC defensive backs in tackles the last two seasons, and he turned down the chance to enter the NFL Draft to return for his senior season. Now fellow senior safety Darius West and senior cornerbacks Derrick Baity, Chris Westry and Lonnie Johnson — who joined the program as a junior college transfer last season — must match Edwards' level of play.

SPECIALISTS Kentucky must replace its starting placekicker, punter and punt returner. No hole is bigger than the one left by Austin MacGinnis, the best kicker in program history who rewrote the UK record book while hitting multiple game winners in his career. Freshman Chance Poore will have the first chance to replace MacGinnis, and former professional Australian Rules Football player Max Duffy is the favorite to take over the starting punter job. Bowden could add punt returns to his kickoff return responsibilities as a sophomore.

2018 KENTUCKY ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Clark, Danny	6-2/232	Fr.	Columbus, OH
12	Hoak, Gunnar	6-4/206	So.	Dublin, OH
3	Wilson, Terry	6-3/205	So.	Oklahoma City, OK
17	Wood, Walker	6-0/190	Fr.	Lexington, KY

	RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
28	Johnson, Zach	5-10/185	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
22	King, Sihiem	5-9/172	Sr.	Colquitt, GA
32	Markray, Tyler	5-10/214	Fr.	West Bloomfield, MI
10	Rose, Asim	6-1/208	So.	Cleveland, OH
26	Snell Jr., Benny	5-11/223	Jr.	Westerville, OH

	RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
82	Ali, Josh	6-0/181	So.	Hollywood, FL
2	Baker, Dorian	6-3/205	Sr.	Cleveland Heights, OH
23	Berezowitz, Brayden	5-9/180	Jr.	Lexington, KY
27	Berezowitz, Bryan	5-9/180	Jr.	Lexington, KY
33	Bouvier, David	5-9/168	Sr.	Lexington, KY
1	Bowden, Lynn	6-1/195	So.	Youngstown, OH
81	Epps, Isaiah	6-2/181	So.	Jenks, OK
13	Hughes, Zy'Aire	6-1/182	So.	Paducah, KY
11	Richardson, Tavin	6-3/207	Jr.	Greer, SC
25	Slusher, Brett	6-2/193	Jr.	Fort Mitchell, KY
18	Thomas, Clevan	5-11/207	So.	Miami, FL

	TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
45	Bannerman, Jaylin	6-5/238	So.	Pickerington, OH
87	Conrad, C.J.	6-5/252	Sr.	LaGrange, OH
35	Daido, John	6-5/213	So.	Vienna, VA
36	Henschen, Patrick	6-6/228	So.	Newport, KY
83	Rigg, Justin	6-6/257	Jr.	Springboro, OH

	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
64	Asafo-Adjei, George	6-5/315	Sr.	West Chester, OH
76	Dolcine, Sebastien	6-4/318	Fr.	Hollywood, FL
61	Dotson, Austin	6-6/322	Fr.	Belfry, KY
79	Fortner, Luke	6-6/293	So.	Sylvania, OH
52	Jackson, Drake	6-2/303	So.	Versailles, KY
72	Price, E.J.	6-6/305	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
65	Stallings, Jervontius	6-3/305	Sr.	McComb, MS
71	Stenberg, Logan	6-6/320	Jr.	Madison, AL
66	Watkins, Naasir	6-5/318	Fr.	Laurel, MD
77	Wolfe, Mason	6-6/315	Jr.	Henderson, KY
67	Young, Landon	6-7/305	Jr.	Lexington, KY

	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
96	Abadi-Fitzgerald, Abule	6-6/281	Fr.	Lakeland, FL
95	Bohanna, Quinton	6-4/340	So.	Cordova, TN
90	Carter, T.J.	6-4/265	Jr.	Mableton, GA
98	Dubose, Tymere	6-5/315	Sr.	Youngstown, OH
92	Hoskins, Phil	6-5/306	Jr.	Toledo, OH
59	Looney, Kordell	6-3/297	So.	Springfield, OH
99	Middleton, Adrian	6-3/298	Sr.	Bowling Green, KY
4	Paschal, Joshua	6-3/278	So.	Olney, MD
91	Taylor Jr., Calvin	6-9/300	Jr.	Augusta, GA

	LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
41	Allen, Josh	6-5/252	Sr.	Montclair, NJ
39	Barnett, Elijah	6-3/238	Jr.	Lexington, KY
56	Daniel, Kash	6-1/242	Jr.	Paintsville, KY
20	Daniel, Kengera	6-5/235	Sr.	Raleigh, NC
44	Davis, Jamin	6-4/224	Fr.	Ludowici, GA
40	High, Jackson	5-11/238	So.	Union, KY
34	Jones, Jordan	6-2/218	Sr.	Youngstown, OH
58	King, Alex	6-3/236	Fr.	Mason, OH
38	Nalty, William	6-0/228	So.	Metairie, LA
46	Schlegel, Drew	5-11/218	Jr.	Parker, CO
43	Square, DeAndre	6-1/205	Fr.	Detroit, MI
35	Ware, Denzil	6-2/240	Sr.	Opp, AL
31	Watson, Jamar	6-3/234	So.	Forestville, MD
97	Whittaker, Chris	6-3/227	Fr.	Hollywood, FL
15	Wright, Jordan	6-5/236	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

	DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
23	Ajian, Tyrell	6-0/187	Fr.	Mansfield, OH
8	Baity, Derrick	6-3/188	Sr.	Tampa, FL
29	Corker, Yusuf	6-0/185	Fr.	McDonough, GA
27	Dort, Jr., Cedrick	5-11/176	So.	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
7	Edwards, Mike	6-0/201	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
37	Garner, Stanley	6-2/180	Fr.	Parkway, FL
17	Gilliam, Tobias	5-11/196	So.	Dayton, OH
3	Griffin, Jordan	6-0/194	Jr.	Riverdale, GA
24	Holmes, Aamir	6-2/182	So.	Chicago, IL
6	Johnson, Lonnie	6-3/206	Sr.	Gary, IN
26	Nesbitt, Michael	6-0/196	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
9	Robinson, Davonte	6-2/200	So.	Lexington, KY
16	Walker, Marcus	6-1/208	Jr.	Lake Wales, FL
25	West, Darius	6-0/210	Sr.	Lima, OH
21	Westry, Chris	6-4/197	Sr.	Orange Park, FL
30	Williams, Domonique	5-10/184	Jr.	Knoxville, TN

	SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
53	Best, Blake (LS)	6-1/218	Jr.	Duluth, GA
95	Butler, Miles (K)	5-9/165	Sr.	Paducah, KY
93	Duffy, Max (P)	6-1/194	So.	Perth, Australia
94	Goodfellow, Colin (P)	6-2/218	So.	Cleveland, OH
86	McKinniss, Grant (P)	6-1/200	Jr.	Findlay, OH
96	Ruffolo, Matt (K)	5-11/215	So.	Centerville, OH
42	Yeomans, Tristan (LS)	6-2/208	Sr.	Waycross, GA

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 2	at Southern Miss	W	24-17
Sept. 9	Eastern Kentucky	W	27-16
Sept. 16	at South Carolina	W	23-13
Sept. 23	Florida	L	27-28
Sept. 30	Eastern Michigan	W	24-20
Oct. 7	Missouri	W	40-34
Oct. 21	at Mississippi State	L	7-45
Oct. 28	Tennessee	W	29-26
Nov. 4	Ole Miss	L	34-37
Nov. 11	at Vanderbilt	W	44-21
Nov. 18	at Georgia	L	13-42
Nov. 25	Louisville	L	17-44
Dec. 29	vs. Northwestern #	L	23-24

#Music City Bowl



LYNN BOWDEN

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Stephen Johnson	316	189	2,305	10	6
Lynn Bowden	**4**	**3**	**92**	**0**	**1**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Benny Snell Jr.	**262**	**1,333**	**5.1**	**19**
Stephen Johnson	103	375	3.6	5
Sihiem King	**79**	**364**	**4.6**	**2**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Garrett Johnson	48	539	11.2	2
Tavin Richardson	**27**	**371**	**13.7**	**1**
Kayaune Ross	19	286	15.1	0
Lynn Bowden	**17**	**210**	**12.4**	**0**
C.J. Conrad	**16**	**286**	**17.9**	**4**

KICKING: Austin MacGinnis, 22-28 FGs, 36-36 PATs, 102 points

TACKLES: **Mike Edwards, 97**; Courtney Love, 92

SACKS: **Josh Allen, 7.0**

INTERCEPTIONS: **Mike Edwards, 4**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.5 ppg	10	87
Rushing	161.7 ypg	8	68
Passing	188.2 ypg	10	97
Total	349.8 ypg	11	103
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.2 ppg	8	74
Rushing	175.3 ypg	10	79
Passing	251.6 ypg	13	103
Total	426.9 ypg	12	92
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	5	46

SCOUTING THE WILDCATS

Opposing Coaches Size up Kentucky

"I thought Stephen Johnson was one of the more underrated players in the league. I think he was really good. Made plays with his feet and his arm. You looked at his stats, and they were very consistent. They will miss him. And with Drew Barker no longer on the team, I'm not sure what they will do at quarterback. ... Eddie Gran did a good job with the offense last year. Found the things that they were good at. Ran the Wildcat a bunch. It will be interesting to see how their offense evolves and adapts with a new quarterback. ... Benny Snell is a workhorse. Anybody who can gain 1,000 yards in back-to-back years in the SEC deserves some recognition. I don't put him in the same class as Nick Chubb and Sony Michel at Georgia or some of the backs at Alabama, but to me he is a tough player who runs hard and doesn't just gain the yards the play is blocked for. He can gain above and beyond and get to the second and third level. When he was ejected from (Music City Bowl), that really hurt them. He's a very confident player. A hard worker. He will be the featured player in the offense. ... Lynn Bowden is an exciting young player. They did a lot of creative things to get him the ball. He will be a good player for that program, and he's still really young. ... Mark Stoops has done a nice job. His defenses play hard. I don't know if they are that talented, but they play hard. ... They have gone .500 in the SEC two years in a row. Any time you can do that at Kentucky, you are doing something right. And they have a chance to be pretty good again this season."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

FAMILIAR FACE Kentucky did not renew the contract of former wide receivers coach Lamar Thomas after the season, and Mark Stoops turned to former University of Arizona colleague Michael Smith to fill the spot on his staff. Smith, a former Kansas State player and coach, spent the last five seasons working for Stoops' friend Bret Bielema at Arkansas. With Smith on staff, look for Kentucky to spread its recruiting territory into Louisiana, a state Smith recruited to much success at Arkansas.

10TH ASSISTANT For the NCAA's newly created 10th full-time assistant job, Stoops hired former Indianapolis Colts outside linebackers coach Brad White. White played at Wake Forest while UK special teams coordinator Dean Hood was defensive coordinator with the Deacons, but Hood did not know White was a candidate for the 10th assistant job until deep into the hiring process. White will actually replace Hood as the outside linebackers coach, with Hood moving to coach the defensive backs alongside Steve Clinkscale.

RECORDS IN SIGHT As a sophomore, star running back Benny Snell set the UK single-season records for touchdowns (19) and points (116) and career record for rushing touchdowns (32) while becoming the first player in program history to rush for 1,000 yards in consecutive seasons. He currently ranks eighth on UK's career rushing list (2,424) and could break the program's career records for rushing yards (3,835) and total TDs (37) with a strong junior season.

GET THE BALL TO BOWDEN With no quarterback having appeared in an FBS game yet, wide receiver Lynn Bowden leads all returning Kentucky players in career pass completions (three) thanks to his work in the Wildcat formation as a freshman. Bowden remains the most dynamic playmaker on the Kentucky roster and should continue to see time as a slot wide receiver, Wildcat quarterback and kick returner in 2018. Bowden was a frequent target of praise from coaches during spring drills and could be one of the league's breakout players in the fall.

NATION'S OLDEST 2018 RECRUIT? Kentucky found success using Australian Matt Panton as its punter in 2017, so the staff looked to that country again. This time, the Wildcats signed former professional Australian Rules Football player Max Duffy. At 25 years old, Duffy will easily be the oldest player on the roster, and he still has three years of eligibility. Hood said this spring he hoped Duffy's experience playing in professional stadiums in Australia would have him prepared for difficult road environments at UK.

LONE STAR STATE OF MIND Kentucky faces Texas A&M for the first time since 1953 in October when it travels to College Station. In addition to being the first meeting between the two programs as SEC foes, the game also will represent a reunion for Stoops and his former Florida State boss Jimbo Fisher, who was hired as Texas A&M's new head coach in the offseason.



JORDAN JONES

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.6	37
Defense	27.9	26
Margin	**+2.7**	**33**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	42.1%	59
Defense	46.2%	110
Margin	**-4.1%**	**101**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.6	70
Defense	6.2	105
Margin	**-0.6**	**101**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.3	80
Defense	4.5	76
Margin	**-0.2**	**85**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	0.8	56
Actual	+3	45
Margin	**+2.2**	**44**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

157

Big plays vanished from UK's offensive repertoire in 2017. The Wildcats went from 181 gains of 10-plus yards in 2016 (70th in FBS) to 157 last fall (95th) and from 21 gains of 40-plus yards (24th) to 10 (97th). This was felt mostly in the passing game, where UK went from averaging 14.2 yards per completion to just 12.5.

+2.7

Despite less explosiveness, UK matched its seven-win total from 2016, in part through improvement in the field position game. The Wildcats went from 80th in the country in field position margin (minus-0.8 yards per possession) to 33rd (plus-2.7). Within the SEC, only LSU and Alabama improved their field-tilting by larger margins.

-1.44

This field position advantage was impressive considering the Wildcats' efficiency deficits. UK averaged 5.61 yards per play on first down to opponents' 7.05, a margin of minus-1.44 yards that ranked 119th in FBS and worst in the SEC. Opponents were therefore much less likely to go three-and-out, which should have tilted the field in their direction.

3

Mark Stoops has a chance to establish an elusive level of sustained success this season. On only two occasions has Kentucky reached a bowl for at least three years in a row: From 1949-51 under Bear Bryant and 2006-10 under first Rich Brooks, then Joker Phillips. Stoops could make it three in a row in 2018.

Tim Umphrey

2018 SIGNEES

The new early signing period was kind to Kentucky, with 20 of the 21 players who were verbally committed to the program signing in December, but Wildcats still weren't able to completely avoid the high-profile flips that have plagued the program in recent years.

Four-star Georgia prep quarterback Jarren Williams committed and de-committed from Kentucky twice before ultimately signing with Miami. Four-star Ohio prep linebacker Xavier Peters, the only commitment not to sign in December, flipped to Florida State late in the cycle. Kentucky also finished just short in the race with Ohio State for four-star wide receiver L'Christian "Blue" Smith.

Still, Mark Stoops and his staff were able to fill several positions of need in a 2018 class that should have the benefit of easing into action thanks to returning upperclassmen on both sides of the ball.

Kentucky replaced Williams with former Oregon quarterback Terry Wilson and replaced Peters with four-star Ohio prep linebacker Christopher Oats.

Following the transfer of freshman running back Bryant Koback, the staff added three-star Alabama running back Kavosiey Smoke to pair with three-star Georgia prep running back Chris Rodriguez, who signed in the early period. Kentucky also filled obvious holes on the roster with commitments from two specialists, South Carolina prep placekicker Chance Poore and 25-year-old Australian punter Max Duffy, to compete for starting jobs in the fall.

Perhaps the most intriguing development in Kentucky's 2018 class was the staff reaching into Michigan for the first two Kentucky commitments from that state in the Stoops era.

Defensive backs coach Steve Clinkscale has led the staff's recruiting efforts in Michigan and was key in securing the pledge of four-star defensive lineman Marquan McCall, the highest-rated recruit in the class, and three-star linebacker DeAndre Square.

BY POSITION	
Offensive Linemen	5
Defensive Backs	4
Wide Receivers	3
Running Backs	2
Tight Ends	2
Defensive Linemen	2
Athletes	2
Specialists	2
Quarterbacks	1
Linebackers	1
BY STATE	
Florida	9
Ohio	5
Alabama	2
Georgia	2
Michigan	2
Oklahoma	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Australia	1

Recruit Spotlight

Christopher Oats

LB • Cincinnati, OH

For all of Kentucky's success recruiting Ohio since Mark Stoops and recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow came to Lexington, the Wildcats had not won a true head-to-head recruiting battle with Ohio State in the Buckeye State before 2018.

Four-star Cincinnati prep linebacker Christopher Oats changed that.

"This was truly a kid that [Ohio State] targeted since he was a sophomore," says Marrow, a Youngstown, Ohio, native and UK's Ohio recruiting ace. "Beating them on this kid, it just says volumes for a lot of these other kids. 2019 is a big recruiting class for Ohio next year, and I've been getting a lot of [direct messages] already from kids like, 'Wow.' "

Oats canceled a planned visit to Columbus and ultimately picked Kentucky on National Signing Day.

Oats is one of two players in Kentucky's 2018 class rated as a four-star prospect by each of the three major recruiting services. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* named Oats its Ohio Division II Defensive Player of the Year after he totaled 87 tackles, forced two fumbles, recovered four fumbles and grabbed one interception while helping lead Winton Woods to the Division II state championship game.

Of the 40 players Stoops signed from Ohio before Oats' commitment, just two were listed as holding Ohio State scholarship offers in Rivals' database, and neither of those players was believed to be a take for the Buckeyes by the time they signed with Kentucky.

"Our logo right now probably the last three years has been the second-most dominant logo recruiting in Ohio," Marrow says. "It's just when Ohio State came in you always were nervous."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Marvin Alexander	WR	6-2/175	Miami Gardens, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	684
Brendan Bates	TE	6-5/240	Cincinnati, OH	★★★	★★★	★★★	589
Jamari Brown	CB	6-2/180	Sunrise, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	848
Allen Dailey	WR	6-3/195	Pinson, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	705
Max Duffy	P	6-1/200	Perth, Australia	★★★	★★★	★★	2,325
Stanley Garner	CB	6-2/180	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	468
Davoan Hawkins	DE	6-4/275	Hollywood, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	786
Akeem Hayes	ATH	5-10/175	Hollywood, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	984
Kenneth Horsey	OG	6-3/330	Sanford, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,292
Darian Kinnard	OT	6-7/330	Cleveland, OH	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	314
Nick Lewis	OT	6-9/350	Jacksonville, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	844
Jerquavion Mahone	DT	6-3/300	Manchester, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,002
Marquan McCall	OG	6-3/350	Detroit, MI	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	194
Christopher Oats	OLB	6-4/215	Cincinnati, OH	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	325
Bryce Oliver	WR	6-3/205	Sunrise, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,093
Ashtan Pierre	ATH	6-2/191	Pompano Beach, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,365
Chance Poore	K	6-3/200	Anderson, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	2,071
Chris Rodriguez	RB	6-0/200	McDonough, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,161
Kavosiey Smoke	RB	6-0/215	Wetumpka, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	714
DeAndre Square	S	6-1/200	Detroit, MI	★★★	★★★	★★★	546
Keaton Upshaw	TE	6-6/240	Lima, OH	★★★	★★★	★★★	702
Domonique Williams	CB	5-10/190	Knoxville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	132*
Terry Wilson	QB	6-3/195	Oklahoma City, OK	★★★	★★★★	★★★	39*
Quintin Wilson	C	6-3/320	Cincinnati, OH	★★★	★★★	★★★	636

*junior college transfer

MISSOURI TIGERS

National Forecast: 30 /// SEC East Prediction: 4

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Tennessee-Martin
Sept. 8	Wyoming
Sept. 15	at Purdue
Sept. 22	Georgia
Oct. 6	at South Carolina
Oct. 13	at Alabama
Oct. 20	Memphis
Oct. 27	Kentucky
Nov. 3	at Florida
Nov. 10	Vanderbilt
Nov. 17	at Tennessee
Nov. 24	Arkansas

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 7-5, 3-5 SEC

Few teams have enjoyed the type of midseason turnaround executed by Missouri in 2017. The big question in Columbia: Can the Tigers keep it up? Offensively, the answer appears to be affirmative. QB Drew Lock leads an attack that has few concerns — though the Tigers will need someone (perhaps Emanuel Hall) to replace No. 1 receiver J'Mon Moore, and the unit must get acclimated to new offensive coordinator Derek Dooley. Defensively, there are some issues. While Missouri played well down the stretch, it gave up an average of 42.0 points in the five regular-season games against teams that went to a bowl game. Defensive end, usually a staple of a Mizzou defense, is the biggest concern. The Tigers look like a fringe top-25 team that is capable — if all goes well — of finishing in second place in the SEC East.

Postseason: Belk Bowl vs. Virginia Tech

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Barry Odom

RECORD AT SCHOOL
11-14 (2 years)

CAREER RECORD
11-14 (2 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Derek Dooley

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Ryan Walters

LOCATION
Columbia, MO

STADIUM
Memorial Stadium (71,168)

A lot can change in a short amount of time. In late September 2017, Barry Odom was the captain of a sinking ship, Drew Lock was a quarterback with stalled development and Josh Heupel was the coordinator of an offense that couldn't move the ball.



JOHNATHON JOHNSON

Following disheartening losses to Purdue (35–3) and Auburn (51–14) to end the first month of the season, it appeared fair to wonder if Odom, Heupel and company were going to even get a third year in charge in Columbia. Mizzou looked better in losses at Kentucky and Georgia but still returned home 1–5. The schedule was going to ease up down the stretch, with non-conference games against Idaho and UConn and a finishing stretch against four collapsing teams (Florida, Tennessee, Vanderbilt, Arkansas). Still, Mizzou needed to win at least five of six to reach a bowl. Not bloody likely.

Two months later, Missouri was the owner of a six-game winning streak. Heupel was taking over as head coach of an undefeated UCF team. Lock, now the holder of the single-season SEC passing touchdowns record, was weighing whether to go pro or return for his senior season. Odom's seat had gone from hot to cold.

Missouri's win streak ended in the Texas Bowl, but the Tigers had turned around both their season and their program trajectory. Odom and his Tigers return almost all of last year's explosive offense but must replace their offensive coordinator and a lot of talent at both defensive end and safety. Your momentum only lasts until the next plot twist, so what's in store next for a team that experienced two very different seasons last fall?

QUARTERBACKS Ignoring the bipolar nature of Missouri's fall campaign, Lock's season stats were almost literally unprecedented within the SEC: 3,964 passing yards, 44 touchdowns, 13 interceptions and a 165.7 passer rating that ranked fourth in FBS. He averaged 356 yards per game and threw three-quarters of his TDs in Mizzou's seven wins. Lock waited until Odom had made his coordinator replacement to announce his decision to return, and he was evidently satisfied with the choice. Former Tennessee head coach Derek Dooley spent the last five seasons as receivers coach for the Dallas Cowboys and offered a path to merge together the worlds of pro-style offense — which in Mizzou's case appears to mean a wider variety of tempo and receiver routes and occasionally having Lock line up under center — with the run-game-and-deep-balls approach that worked so well over the second half of 2017. The results of this experiment could go in countless directions, but there's no question that the Mizzou offense returns a lot on paper this fall, and the list of assets begins with the 6'4" Lock.

RUNNING BACKS The Cowboys certainly had some big-time running backs in Dooley's Dallas tenure, and he inherits one of the more exciting duos in the SEC. Damarea Crockett rushed for 1,062 yards as a freshman in 2016 before missing half of 2017 with injury. Sophomore Larry Rountree III made the most of the carries he got in Crockett's absence. Rountree rushed for 155 yards against Tennessee, and after a slow start, he averaged six yards per carry over the final 10 games of 2017. This is an inex-

Tim Umphrey

perienced pair — Rountree has only 126 career carries, and Crockett has fumbled six times in 17 games — so Mizzou could occasionally miss the steadiness of Ish Witter, who fumbled twice in two full years and rushed for 545 yards over the last four games to eke out a 1,000-yard season. But the upside in the backfield is undeniable.

RECEIVERS Let's start with what Mizzou doesn't have: J'Mon Moore. The mercurial X-receiver posted back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons and scrapped with No. 1 cornerbacks for each of the last two years. Combined with a new offensive coordinator, that could create an entirely new identity for the passing game. Now to what Mizzou does have: almost literally everybody else. Emanuel Hall had 817 yards (at a ridiculous 24.8 yards per catch) and eight touchdowns despite battling injury at the beginning and end of the year. Tight end Albert Okwuegbunam is a future all-conference performer and a massive red zone threat. Slot receiver Johnathon Johnson has caught 65 passes for 1,159 yards and eight scores over the last two years. Backups Richaud Floyd (slot) and Kendall Blanton (tight end) have averaged 14.1 yards per catch and combined for six TDs over two seasons. Hall will now have to deal with No. 1 corners and shake free of 2017's hamstring issues, and another wideout — senior Nate Brown? Junior college transfer Harry Ballard? Oregon grad transfer Alex Ofodile? — will need to emerge to complement the weapons at slot and tight end. But this is one heck of a skill corps at Lock's disposal.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Missouri almost never moved backward in 2017. Tiger runners were stopped at or behind the line on just 13.3 percent of non-sack carries (fifth in FBS), and passers were sacked on only 2.9 percent of pass attempts (eighth). Heupel's quick-action system had something to do with that, but so, too, did the offensive line. With offensive line coach Glen Elarbee following Heupel to UCF, it will be up to new position coach Brad Davis to continue last year's prowess. Davis will have almost all of last year's arsenal at his disposal, as those responsible for 61 of last year's 65 starts return. That includes two-year starters in right tackle Paul Adams and left guard Kevin Pendleton.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN In April, Marcell Frazier became the seventh Mizzou defensive lineman to get drafted in the last six years. "D-Line Zou" became the calling card of Gary Pinkel's last few defenses, and tackle Terry Beckner Jr. should make it eight drafted in seven years next spring. Beckner and Frazier were the catalysts for massive defensive improvement over the second half of the season. Finally healthy after two season-ending knee injuries in two seasons, Beckner had 8.5 tackles for a loss during Mizzou's win streak. He will be the anchor for one of the league's best defensive tackle units. Joining him are Texas transfer



QB **DREW LOCK**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY TIGERS

TERRY BECKNER JR., DT A former blue-chipper who got healthy and dominated late in 2017 before choosing to forego draft consideration and return for one more season.

DAMAREA CROCKETT, RB In just a season and a half (he missed half of 2017), the junior has rushed for 1,543 yards (6.6 per carry) and 12 touchdowns.

DREW LOCK, QB SEC TD king elected to return to see what he could do with the new pro-style concepts.

TEREZ HALL, LB Maybe the Tigers' best defender over the full season; had 12.5 tackles for a loss and took part in 22 run stops at or behind the line.

EMANUEL HALL, WR Hall caught 28 passes for 713 yards (25.5 per catch) and had eight scores over the last eight games of the regular season.

KEY LOSSES

J'MON MOORE, WR Caught 127 balls for 2,094 yards and 18 touchdowns in two years in Josh Heupel's offense.

MARCELL FRAZIER, DE Pulled off incredible late-season surges in final two seasons — 7.5 TFLs in the last three games of 2016 and 11.5 in the last six games of 2017.

ISH WITTER, RB Underappreciated blocker and pass catcher finished career with 2,698 combined rushing/receiving yards and 15 total touchdowns.

ANTHONY SHERRILS, S Three-year starter was stabilizing force for a unit with shaky cornerbacks; produced three TFLs and two interceptions as a senior.

KALEB PREWETT, S Status is unclear after indefinite suspension but recorded four TFLs and three passes defensed and took part in six run stuffs as well.

RISING STAR

JORDAN ELLIOTT was carving out a niche as a freshman on the Texas defensive line in 2016, but an injury put him on the sideline, and he elected to transfer. He spent 2017 dominating on the scout team, and he could quickly become a disruptive complement to Terry Beckner Jr.

and former blue-chipper Jordan Elliott, the Defensive MVP of last year's scout team, plus seniors Rashad Brandon and Walter Palmore, sophomore Kobie Whiteside (who spent part of spring ball on the first string) and incoming transfer Antar Thompson. The end position appears as thin as the tackle position is loaded. The departure of Frazier and Jordan Harold means that only one returning end — sophomore Tre Williams — had more than two tackles for a loss last year. If senior Nate Anderson and sophomore Chris Turner don't find some D-Line Zou fairy dust, the pass rush could suffer.

LINEBACKERS The linebacking corps is stocked and experienced. Terez Hall was Missouri's most consistent defender in 2017 and could threaten for all-conference honors. The trio of Hall, Cale Garrett and Brandon Lee combined for 27.5 TFLs, 4.5 sacks and 10 passes defensed. Defensive coordinator Ryan Walters' attack will utilize the nickel back quite a bit, but Lee is solid enough in pass coverage to make the nickel a luxury instead of a necessity. If any of the starters miss time with injury, Mizzou's depth is unknown. Tigers coaches are excited about the trio of Aubrey Miller Jr., Jamal Brooks, and nickel/strong-side backer Joshuah Bledsoe, but all three are true sophomores.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)				
WR	**84**	**Emanuel Hall (Sr.)**		Kam Scott (Fr.)
WR	7	Nate Brown (Sr.)	82	Harry Ballard (So.)
WR	**87**	**Johnathon Johnson (Jr.)**	17	Richaud Floyd (Jr.)
LT	**70**	**Yasir Durant (Jr.)**	50	Hyrin White (Fr.)
LG	**71**	**Kevin Pendleton (Sr.)**	59	Case Cook (Fr.)
C	**55**	**Trystan Colon-Castillo (So.)**	67	Jonah Dubinski (Jr.)
RG	**75**	**Tre'vour Wallace-Simms (Jr.)**	56	Samson Bailey (Sr.)
RT	**77**	**Paul Adams (Sr.)**	79	Larry Borom (Fr.)
TE	**81**	**Albert Okwuegbunam (So.)**	11	Kendall Blanton (Sr.)
QB	**3**	**Drew Lock (Sr.)**	2	Micah Wilson (So.)
RB	16	Damarea Crockett (Jr.)	33	Larry Rountree (So.)
DEFENSE (6)				
DE	93	Tre Williams (So.)	29	Nate Anderson (Sr.)
DT	**5**	**Terry Beckner Jr. (Sr.)**	13	Rashad Brandon (Sr.)
DT	95	Jordan Elliott (So.)	78	Kobie Whiteside (So.)
DE	39	Chris Turner (So.)		Daniel Parker (Fr.)
LB	**24**	**Terez Hall (Sr.)**	22	Aubrey Miller (So.)
LB	**47**	**Cale Garrett (Jr.)**	25	Jamal Brooks (So.)
NB	**4**	**Brandon Lee (Sr.)**	18	Joshuah Bledsoe (So.)
CB	**2**	**DeMarkus Acy (Jr.)**	1	Tyrone Collins (Fr.)
CB	**14**	**Adam Sparks (So.)**	21	Christian Holmes (So.)
FS	7	Cam Hilton (Sr.)	10	Tyree Gillespie (So.)
SS	3	Ronnell Perkins (Jr.)	11	Jordan Ulmer (So.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	19	Tucker McCann (Jr.)	**KR**	33 Larry Rountree (So.)
P	26	Corey Fatony (Sr.)	**PR**	17 Richaud Floyd (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS Mizzou's cornerback depth was tested in 2017 and only got about a C grade. After losing both 2016 starters, the Tigers also lost projected starter Christian Holmes to preseason injury. That left career backup Logan Cheadle, true sophomore DeMarkus Acy and, later, true freshman Adam Sparks to fend for themselves. During Mizzou's 1–5 start, the Tigers allowed a 69 percent completion rate and 10 touchdown passes. It got better, though. Acy settled in, Sparks usurped Cheadle, and experienced safeties Anthony Sherrils and Kaleb Prewett keyed a pass defense that was downright solid down the stretch. Acy and Sparks return, as does Holmes, but now there's been turnover at safety. Sherrils graduated, and Prewett was suspended for the spring following an undisclosed incident. If he does not return, some combination of senior Cam Hilton, Oregon transfer Khalil Oliver, junior Ronnell Perkins and sophomore Tyree Gillespie will have to figure things out. This year's safeties aren't as inexperienced as last year's corners, but there is uncertainty all the same.

SPECIALISTS Special teams went from weakness to strength in 2017, and all the reasons for the turnaround return. Punter Corey Fatony returns for a fourth year of mostly excellent kicks, placekicker Tucker McCann overcame his freshman yips by making 15-of-17 field goals as a sophomore, and punt returner Richaud Floyd returned two kicks for scores and averaged 19.8 yards per return. This should be one of the SEC's better units.

Tim Umphrey

2018 MISSOURI ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3 Lock, Drew	6-4/225	Sr.	Lee's Summit, MO
19 Lowary, Jack	6-4/225	Jr.	Huntington Beach, CA
5 Powell, Taylor	6-2/200	Fr.	Fayetteville, AR
18 Scott Jr., Lindsey	5-11/210	So.	Zachary, LA
2 Wilson, Micah	6-3/215	So.	Tulsa, OK

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
16 Crockett, Damarea	5-11/225	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
22 Downing, Dawson	6-0/225	So.	Mission, KS
43 Jones, Jerney	5-10/195	So.	Republic, MO
4 Miller, Isaiah	5-11/200	Fr.	Baldwin, FL
33 Rountree III, Larry	5-10/210	So.	Raleigh, NC
45 Vaoifi, Ezra	5-11/220	Fr.	Independence, MO

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
82 Ballard III, Harry	6-2/205	So.	Florissant, MO
30 Banister, Barrett	6-0/185	Fr.	Fayetteville, AR
82 Barber, Kentrell	5-11/185	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
7 Brown, Nate	6-3/210	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
36 Ellinger, Daniel	6-4/200	So.	Jefferson City, MO
17 Floyd, Richaud	5-11/190	Jr.	Gulfport, MS
14 Gicinto, Dominic	5-9/170	Fr.	Raytown, MO
84 Hall, Emanuel	6-3/200	Sr.	Franklin, TN
87 Johnson, Johnathon	5-10/185	Jr.	Memphis, TN
26 McCarty, Carson	5-11/180	Fr.	Columbia, MO
Ofodile, Alex	6-3/211	Jr.	Columbia, MO
8 Smith, Justin	6-7/220	Jr.	Dublin, GA
28 Spadarotto, Steven	6-2/185	Sr.	Santa Maria, CA

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
11 Blanton, Kendall	6-6/260	Sr.	Blue Springs, MO
88 Christopherson, Logan	6-6/245	Fr.	Lemont, IL
81 Okwuegbunam, Albert	6-5/260	So.	Springfield, IL
89 Scales, Brendan	6-4/235	So.	Wildwood, MO

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
77 Adams, Paul	6-6/315	Sr.	Nashville, TN
56 Bailey, Samson	6-5/295	Sr.	Lamar, MO
79 Borom, Larry	6-6/345	Fr.	Bloomfield Hills, MI
55 Colon-Castillo, Trystan	6-4/315	So.	Webb City, MO
59 Cook, Case	6-5/300	Fr.	Carrollton, GA
67 Dubinski, Jonah	6-2/295	Jr.	Columbia, MO
70 Durant, Yasir	6-7/340	Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
62 Grossman, Thomas	6-3/275	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
69 Harris, AJ	6-4/310	Jr.	Stilwell, KS
71 Pendleton, Kevin	6-4/330	Sr.	Lee's Summit, MO
75 Wallace-Simms, Tre'Vour	6-5/340	Jr.	East St. Louis, IL
50 White, Hyrin	6-6/295	Fr.	DeSoto, TX

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
45 Agbasimere, Franklin	6-2/255	Jr.	Lagos, Nigeria
29 Anderson, Nate	6-4/265	Sr.	Toronto, ON
5 Beckner Jr., Terry	6-4/305	Sr.	East St. Louis, IL
13 Brandon, Rashad	6-3/300	Sr.	Jersey City, NJ
97 Byers, Akial	6-4/295	So.	Fayetteville, AR
20 Eaddy, Myles	6-0/240	So.	Plantation, FL
95 Elliott, Jordan	6-4/325	So.	Missouri City, TX
94 Jacobs, Tyrell	6-4/290	Jr.	Kenner, LA
92 Keevins, Macaulay	6-2/220	So.	Columbia, MO
99 Palmore, Walter	6-4/320	Sr.	Columbus, GA
72 Sampson, Caleb	6-4/280	Fr.	Covington, LA
96 Thompson, Antar	6-5/310	So.	St. Louis, MO
39 Turner, Chris	6-4/250	So.	Hammond, LA
90 Utsey, Markell	6-4/305	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
78 Whiteside, Kobie	6-1/300	So.	Houston, TX
88 Williams, Chris	6-3/250	Jr.	Columbia, MO
93 Williams, Tre	6-5/250	So.	Columbia, MO

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
54 Britton, Joe	6-1/215	Fr.	Rogers, AR
25 Brooks, Jamal	6-1/250	So.	Bessemer, AL
47 Garrett, Cale	6-3/235	Jr.	Kearney, MO
24 Hall, Terez	6-2/230	Sr.	Lithonia, GA
53 Hoy, Joe	5-11/200	Jr.	Wauconda, IL
91 Jochens, George	6-2/245	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
15 Jones, Grant	6-3/220	Sr.	Columbia, MO
4 Lee, Brandon	6-2/225	Sr.	Indianapolis, IN
41 May, Chance	6-1/230	Fr.	Kansas City, MO
22 Miller Jr., Aubrey	6-2/225	So.	Memphis, TN
16 Nathan Jr., Gerald	6-1/200	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
57 Parker, Jairan	6-0/220	Fr.	Houston, TX
49 Pierce, Alec	6-1/215	Fr.	Visalia, CA
58 Robinson, Noah	6-4/240	Sr.	Worcester, MA
6 Ross, Tavon	6-0/205	Sr.	Cochran, GA
46 Trump, Jacob	6-3/230	Sr.	Kahoka, MO
48 Winters, Roderick	5-11/240	Sr.	Arlington, TX

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
2 Acy, DeMarkus	6-2/195	Jr.	Dallas, TX
18 Bledsoe, Joshuah	6-0/200	So.	Houston, TX
1 Collins, Tyrone	5-11/165	Fr.	Bradenton, FL
10 Gillespie, Tyree	6-0/215	So.	Ocala, FL
7 Hilton, Cam	6-0/185	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
21 Holmes, Christian	6-1/200	So.	Leland, MS
15 Nelson, Dominic	6-0/200	Sr.	Florissant, MO
Oliver, Khalil	6-0/210	Sr.	Meridian, ID
35 Pack, Mason	6-0/190	So.	Springfield, MO
3 Perkins, Ronnell	6-0/200	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
10 Petry, Terry	6-1/180	Fr.	Missouri City, TX
30 Sales, Zion	5-10/185	Fr.	Southlake, TX
14 Sparks, Adam	6-0/175	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
31 Stribling IV, Finis	5-11/195	Sr.	Thompson's Station, TN
11 Ulmer, Jordan	6-2/195	So.	Belleville, MI

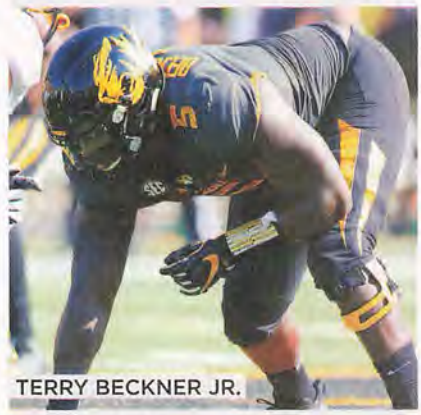
SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
92 Bartolotta, Nick (K)	5-6/185	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
26 Fatony, Corey (P)	5-11/205	Sr.	Franklin, TN
90 Koetting, Sean (K)	6-3/195	Fr.	Columbia, MO
19 McCann, Tucker (K)	6-0/205	Jr.	O'Fallon, IL
81 Whitehouse, Harley (LS)	6-0/225	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
51 Wise, Drew (LS)	6-2/235	So.	Lawrence, KS
86 Workman, James (LS)	6-0/215	Jr.	Renton, WA

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 2	Missouri State	W	72-43
Sept. 9	South Carolina	L	13-31
Sept. 16	Purdue	L	3-35
Sept. 23	Auburn	L	14-51
Oct. 7	at Kentucky	L	34-40
Oct. 14	at Georgia	L	28-53
Oct. 21	Idaho	W	68-21
Oct. 28	at Connecticut	W	52-12
Nov. 4	Florida	W	45-16
Nov. 11	Tennessee	W	50-17
Nov. 18	at Vanderbilt	W	45-17
Nov. 24	at Arkansas	W	48-45
Dec. 27	vs. Texas #	L	16-33

#Texas Bowl



TERRY BECKNER JR.

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Drew Lock	419	242	3,964	44	13
Micah Wilson	10	5	48	0	1

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Ish Witter	188	1,049	5.6	6
Larry Rountree III	126	703	5.6	6
Damarea Crockett	80	481	6.0	2

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
J'Mon Moore	65	1,082	16.6	10
Johnathon Johnson	41	724	17.7	6
Emanuel Hall	33	817	24.8	8
Albert Okwuegbunam	29	415	14.3	11

KICKING: Tucker McCann, 15-17 FGs, 51-53 PATs, 96 points

TACKLES: Cale Garrett, 105; Terez Hall, 85

SACKS: Marcell Frazier, 7.0; Terry Beckner Jr., 7.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Three players tied with 2

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.5 ppg	1	14
Rushing	193.5 ypg	6	36
Passing	308.6 ypg	2	14
Total	502.2 ypg	1	8
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.8 ppg	12	93
Rushing	159.6 ypg	8	58
Passing	254.5 ypg	14	107
Total	414.1 ypg	11	83
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.62	14	111

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size up Missouri

"I think Drew Lock is really, really good. I am curious to see how losing (offensive coordinator) Josh Heupel will hurt him, because I thought their system was outstanding. Lock might throw too many interceptions, and he is a little bit a product of the system, but I think he is a very good quarterback. ... The two receivers on the perimeter, Emanuel Hall and J'Mon Moore, were really good players. The tight end (Albert Okwuegbunam) is a really good player. ... They did feast on teams not playing well at the end of the year, but they were blowing teams out. I was surprised they didn't play better in the bowl game. The offense was just bad. ... The Derek Dooley hire (at offensive coordinator) was off the radar. I don't know what he's going to do there. I don't necessarily think it was a bad hire. Just surprising. ... Whoever called the plays in the bowl game, that looked like a bad offense. Texas just suffocated them. ... Their running backs are good. Possibly a product of the system, but they are good. They run the ball well as a team. Their offense is balanced. They don't just throw the ball all over the field. You have to make a decision against those guys, because they do so many things. They make you define yourself as a defense: Are we committed to stopping the run or are we committed to defending the pass? My point is that the running backs aren't running against loaded boxes a lot. They are running in optimal run situations. But those guys are good. They can make you miss in the second level. ... I think Barry Odom is good. If they give him time, I think he can do there what Pat Fitzgerald has done at Northwestern. He is a Missouri guy who really wants to be there."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH Following the Tigers' 51–14 loss to Auburn, head coach Barry Odom went off on a rant designed as much for his players' ears as reporters'. Among the best quotes: "I want to get one thing real straight: I'm gonna win here. … This is a turnaround, and I'm built for this because I've been in a whole heck of a lot of 'em my entire life. … 2004, everybody wanted to run Gary Pinkel out of town, 'kay, that's pretty damn foolish. … We're not winning games yet, but we will. … This ain't dark days — this is, when the going gets tough, you fight together, and you go find a way to get it done … I got a guy that's the third-team left tackle over at [Columbia] Rock Bridge High School that's got a Twitter account that's got 12 followers, and he wants to put out how terrible we are." All in under two minutes. Pre-meditated? Almost certainly. Referenced repeatedly during Mizzou's sudden turnaround and six-game win streak later in the year? Absolutely.

THE REAL MIZZOU? In their first five games against FBS competition, all losses, the Tigers averaged 5.9 yards per play and allowed 6.5; over the next six games, all wins, they averaged 7.6 and allowed 4.8. The scoring margins were even more stark: 18.4 points per game for and 42.0 against during the losing streak and 51.3 for and 21.3 against during the winning streak.

WELCOME BACK, COACH When Josh Heupel left to take the UCF head-coaching job, Barry Odom's search for a new offensive coordinator took an unpredictable turn. Amid predictable rumors about Power 5 offensive coordinator A and small-school head coach B, Odom ended up giving the job to a total wild card — and zero-time offensive coordinator — in Derek Dooley.

HELLO, DRAFT BUZZ Drew Lock elected to return to Mizzou instead of going pro, in part because he wanted to learn the pro-style concepts that Dooley will theoretically teach him. To say the least, there's a lot on the line: Along with prospects like Auburn's Jarrett Stidham, Penn State's Trace McSorley, West Virginia's Will Grier and perhaps Michigan's Shea Patterson, Lock enters 2018 as one of the hottest QB prospects for the 2019 draft.

QUOTABLE DEREK DOOLEY No one knows how Dooley will perform as a play caller, but he's still got a way with words. In his introductory press conference, he released gems like "I didn't really want to be in this comfortable place … I'm a glutton for punishment," and "Pro-style basically means you run everything, I guess. I don't even know what pro-style means anymore."

PRONOUNCED "OH-COO-WAY-BEN-NAHM" Mizzou's starting tight end Albert Okwuegbunam had a star turn as a redshirt freshman in 2017, setting a Mizzou freshman record with 11 touchdown receptions. He might already be the league's best tight end. He's also got maybe the toughest name in the conference to pronounce. Your pronunciation guide is above, but you can go ahead and just say "Albert O," too.



LARRY ROUNTREE III

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	27.9	109
Defense	29.3	60
Margin	-1.4	90
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.6%	19
Defense	40.2%	58
Margin	+5.4%	27
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	7.1	6
Defense	5.6	63
Margin	+1.5	13
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.1	11
Defense	4.6	85
Margin	+0.5	31
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-1.9	86
Actual	-8	111
Margin	-6.1	112

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

5.7

During Mizzou's six losses, the Tigers' offense averaged just 3.7 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40), an average that would have ranked 123rd over the entire season. In their seven wins, they averaged 5.7 points per opportunity. That would have been tops in FBS over a full season.

2.8

You were guaranteed to see some fireworks in Mizzou games. The Tigers both produced and allowed 2.8 gains per game each of 30-plus yards — that put them in the top 25 on offense and in the bottom 25 on defense. They were one of only six teams to both produce and allow an average of at least one 50-yard gain per game.

16.4

Mizzou's big-play issues on defense weren't a risk-reward thing, as Tiger defenders weren't making a lot of havoc plays. Havoc rate is a team's tackles for a loss, forced fumbles and passes defensed (intercepted or broken up) divided by total defensive plays, and Mizzou's havoc rate of 16.4 percent was a very mediocre 58th in FBS.

28

Mizzou had the second-worst fumbles luck in the country in 2017 — the Tigers fumbled 13 times and lost 11 of them, while opponents fumbled 12 times and lost only five. They recovered only 28 percent of the season's 25 total fumbles, better than only Rutgers (25.9 percent). Luck of the bounce cost them five to six turnovers.

AP

2018 SIGNEES

Sometimes you can get caught up in big recruiting battles and end up with talent you wanted, not necessarily talent you needed. That certainly wasn't the case for Missouri in its 2018 class. The Tigers had a unique opportunity with a larger than normal crop of in-state blue-chippers but landed only one of the state's top 10: defensive end Daniel Parker.

As the state's best talent left for Oklahoma, Ohio State, USC, Clemson, Texas and elsewhere, Barry Odom was forced to look around the country for the three-star chip-on-shoulder types — the type of recruit Odom himself was at Mizzou a couple of decades ago. This doesn't do much for your recruiting ranking, but if you keep them in the program and develop them, it can work out. It puts a lot of pressure on your player development efforts, however; that's why recruiting rankings tend to be predictive in the first place.

That said, Mizzou addressed needs pretty well.

The Tigers needed a pass-rushing boost and landed Parker, Jatorian Hansford and Trajan Jeffcoat. They needed to prepare for the loss of a couple of linebacker starters and landed a trio that included Texas' Chad Bailey, a four-star prospect according to Rivals. They were low on corners and got a couple of keepers in Florida's Tyrone Collins and Texas' Chris Mills.

They needed to replenish receiver depth and landed four, including St. Louis prospect (via the junior college ranks) Harry Ballard III and Kam Scott, who was sought by quite a few SEC programs.

And they went the grad transfer route to land safety Khalil Oliver and receiver (and Columbia product) Alex Ofodile, both from Oregon.

BY POSITION	
Linebackers	5
Wide Receivers	4
Offensive Linemen	4
Defensive Linemen	4
Defensive Backs	3
Running Backs	2
Quarterbacks	1
Tight Ends	1
Athletes	1
BY STATE	
Texas	9
Missouri	5
Florida	2
Georgia	2
Arizona	1
Louisiana	1
Michigan	1
New York	1
North Carolina	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1

Recruit Spotlight

Antar Thompson

DT • St. Louis, MO

Some people take the "all good things come to those who wait" quote a little more seriously than others.

Defensive tackle signee Antar Thompson was originally a three-star prospect from St. Louis' Maplewood-Richmond Heights High in 2013, the same class that produced Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott and a number of players who just graduated from Mizzou.

Thompson was a two-time All-Metro performer who signed with Mizzou but failed to qualify out of high school. He went the junior college route, had a son and moved back home for a while, but in 2016 he resumed his football career, playing 11 games and recording three sacks for Highland (Kan.) Community College. He redshirted in 2017 and committed to Bobby Petrino and Louisville over the summer. But Barry Odom continued to nurture the relationship between Thompson and the Tigers, and Thompson eventually flipped his commitment in the fall. At the age of 23, he signed with Mizzou for the second time in February.

At 6'5", 310, Thompson is built like a prototype defensive tackle, but he might have to wait his turn to see the field at maybe the deepest position on the Mizzou two-deep, in a rotation that includes seniors Terry Beckner Jr., Rashad Brandon and Walter Palmore — not to mention exciting sophomores in Kobie Whiteside and former four-star prospects Jordan Elliott and Akial Byers.

One thing's certain, though: Thompson has proven he has the patience to wait his turn.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Tyler Badie	RB	5-9/170	Memphis, TN	★★★	★★★	★★	1,532
Chad Bailey	ILB	6-0/235	Missouri City, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★★	388
Simi Bakare	RB	5-11/195	Round Rock, TX	★★★	★★★	★★	2,070
Harry Ballard	WR	6-2/205	Florissant, MO	★★★	★★★★	★★★	108*
NIck Bolton	ILB	6-0/227	Frisco, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,119
Tyrone Collins	CB	5-11/165	Bradenton, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,186
Xavier Delgado	OT	6-5/300	Glendale, AZ	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,674
Javon Foster	OT	6-6/300	West Bloomfield, MI	★★★	★★★	★★	1,533
Dominic Gicinto	WR	5-9/170	Raytown, MO	★★★	★★★	★★	1,423
Danny Gray	WR	6-1/174	Dallas, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	519
Jatorian Hansford	OLB	6-4/220	Forsyth, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	768
Trajan Jeffcoat	DE	6-3/220	Columbia, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	878
Jalen Knox	ATH	6-0/185	Mansfield, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	432
Bobby Lawrence	OT	6-8/300	Saint Joseph, MO	★★★	★★★	★★	1,559
Chris Mills	CB	6-0/180	Converse, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,182
Gerald Nathan Jr.	ILB	6-1/200	Charlotte, NC	★★★	★★★	★★★	839
Daniel Parker	DE	6-3/268	Blue Springs, MO	★★★	★★★	★★★★	497
Mike Ruth	OT	6-7/300	Coppell, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,061
Lindsey Scott Jr.	QB	5-11/210	Zachary, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	38*
Kam Scott	WR	6-2/165	Manvel, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	428
Messiah Swinson	TE	6-7/260	Glen Head, NY	★★★	★★★	★★★	870
Antar Thompson	DT	6-5/310	Saint Louis, MO	★★★	★★★	★★★	44*
Khmari Thompson	DT	6-1/185	Lawrenceville, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,015
Jarvis Ware	CB	6-1/175	Apopka, FL	★★★	★★★	★★	1,529
Cameron Wilkins	ILB	6-2/223	Del Valle, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,419

*junior college transfer

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

National Forecast: 27 /// SEC East Prediction: 3

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Coastal Carolina
Sept. 8	Georgia
Sept. 15	Marshall
Sept. 22	at Vanderbilt
Sept. 29	at Kentucky
Oct. 6	Missouri
Oct. 13	Texas A&M
Oct. 27	Tennessee
Nov. 3	at Ole Miss
Nov. 10	at Florida
Nov. 17	Chattanooga
Nov. 24	at Clemson

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 7-5, 4-4 SEC

The Gamecocks had good fortune on their side last year, using a plus-11 turnover margin to win six games by eight points or fewer. Repeating that luck won't be easy, but coach Will Muschamp's team may not need it in 2018. That's due to an offense that returns eight starters, including quarterback Jake Bentley and one of the SEC's top receiving corps. New offensive coordinator Bryan McClendon has promised to use more tempo, which should benefit Bentley and spark a rushing attack that averaged just 4.1 yards per carry in SEC games (10th in the league). The added firepower on offense is necessary with a defense that lost key players at each level and features significant concerns in the secondary. If McClendon finds the right answers on offense, matching last year's nine wins is within reach.

Postseason: Music City Bowl vs. Maryland

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Will Muschamp

RECORD AT SCHOOL
15-11 (2 years)

CAREER RECORD
43-32 (6 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Bryan McClendon

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Travaris Robinson

LOCATION
Columbia, SC

STADIUM
Williams-Brice Stadium (80,250)

Coach Will Muschamp enters his seventh season leading an SEC team, and he's still trying to get his offense figured out. Muschamp's four-year tenure at Florida was lauded for almost everything, but an inability to get the Gators offense turned around short-circuited all of his other progress, and he was fired after the 2014 season. After one season as Auburn's defensive coordinator, he was given another shot at a head coaching job by South Carolina in 2016. Again, Muschamp is being praised for his handling of all things not involving the offense. In fact, the Gamecocks have improved their overall record by three games in each of his first two seasons (from 3–9 in 2015 to 6–7 in 2016 to 9–4 in 2017), marking the first time that has happened in school history. Still, the offense is an issue he needs to solve.



DEEBO SAMUEL

Muschamp fired offensive coordinator Kurt Roper after the 2017 regular season and gave his wide receivers coach Bryan McClendon an audition during the Outback Bowl. McClendon showed Muschamp enough to get the job full time, becoming the fourth offensive coordinator to work for Muschamp and promising a more up-tempo pace than the Gamecocks have shown in the last two years, when they finished 12th and 14th in the league in scoring.

The defense, under fast-rising coordinator Travaris Robinson, is trending up. South Carolina finished fifth in the SEC in scoring defense last year but must replace plenty up the middle in 2018.

With Florida and Tennessee in a period of transition thanks to coaching changes, South Carolina can realistically enter the 2018 season with its eye on second place in the SEC East, the same spot it claimed a year ago. It's probably a bit much to expect the Gamecocks to compete with defending conference champion and national runner-up Georgia, but South Carolina gets the Bulldogs in the second game of the season at home, so there's always hope. "I think they have handled what little success we have had very well. It's been very little," Muschamp says. "I told our football team we have made progress, but we haven't accomplished anything. Let's understand where we are."

QUARTERBACKS There was a lot of hype about the signing of athletic, four-star quarterback prospect Dakereon Joyner, but this still is Jake Bentley's team for the next year — at least. The 6'4", 224-pound junior has started the last 20 games and has 4,214 passing yards in his career. While many in the fan base worry about missed throws in 2017, Muschamp and McClendon have the utmost confidence in Bentley. In fact, McClendon believes Bentley can have the type of season that could lead him to head to the NFL a year early. Muschamp named fifth-year senior Michael Scarnecchia as the No. 2 quarterback at the conclusion of spring practice. The Florida native has attempted one pass in his career.

Bentley: Paul Abell; Samuel: Chris Keane

RUNNING BACKS The Gamecocks have three good running backs, but position coach Bobby Bentley has bemoaned the fact that no one has proven to be a great running back yet. Juniors A.J. Turner, Rico Dowdle and Ty'Son Williams juggled the starting job in 2017, with Turner starting six of the final eight games. Turner finished the year with 531 yards, Williams with 471 and Dowdle with 251. As a team, South Carolina finished 12th in the league in rushing, which qualifies as a fatal offensive flaw in Muschamp's mind.

RECEIVERS The story here can be summed up in one sentence: Deebo Samuel is back. The 6'0", 210-pound senior tied for the team lead in touchdowns (six) last year despite suffering a season-ending leg injury in the third game of the season. He returned two kickoffs for 97-yard touchdowns and had 15 catches for 250 yards and three touchdowns. Samuel was limited in the spring but will be full strength in the fall. In the two games Samuel started and finished, the Gamecocks averaged 33 points. In the next 11 games, they averaged 22.6 points per game. Junior Bryan Edwards stepped up in Samuel's absence and led the team with 64 catches for 793 yards and five touchdowns. With Samuel back, Edwards becomes arguably the best No. 2 wide receiver in the conference, and he could have a big year. Sophomores OrTre Smith and Shi Smith will be expected to take steps forward this year. The bad news is Hayden Hurst, who led all SEC tight ends in both receptions (44) and receiving yards (559), left early for the NFL, leaving a void at the position.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN South Carolina fans have been waiting for years for a dominant offensive line. This group could be that, though depth could be an issue. Senior Zack Bailey was moved from tackle, where he played in 2017, back to guard, where he played in 2016. He has started 26 games in his career, more than any player on the team. Junior Donell Stanley (318 pounds), who started 12 games at guard last year, is expected to take over the starting center spot, giving the Gamecocks more girth than they've had in the middle of the line in a while. Seniors Dennis Daley and Blake Camper are expected to start at tackle.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Junior end D.J. Wonnum is quietly one of the best pass rushers in the conference. The 6'5", 258-pound Georgia native has 89 tackles, 7.5 sacks and 16.5 tackles for a loss in his two seasons with the Gamecocks, and his work ethic earns as much praise from his coaches as anyone on the team. In the middle, junior Javon Kinlaw, who made his Division I debut last year after transferring from junior college, is a star in the making. Kinlaw has dropped more than 40 pounds since signing with South Carolina, and he could be a first-team All-SEC



QB **JAKE BENTLEY**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY GAMECOCKS

JAKE BENTLEY, QB The junior has started the last 20 games and threw every pass for the Gamecocks in 2017, finishing with 2,794 yards, 18 touchdowns and 12 interceptions.

D.J. WONNUM, DE The junior had 6.0 sacks and 13 tackles for a loss, both team highs, last year. His younger brother Dylan is one of the team's top incoming recruits.

DEEBO SAMUEL, WR After six TDs in the first three games last year, Samuel missed the next 10 due to injury. One of the most dynamic receivers in the SEC.

T.J. BRUNSON, LB The unquestioned leader of the defense had 88 tackles and three fumble recoveries in 2017.

BRYSON ALLEN-WILLIAMS, LB Missed 10 games due to a shoulder injury in 2017. Will split time between the strong-side LB and Buck end spots.

KEY LOSSES

HAYDEN HURST, TE Hurst's early departure leaves the Gamecocks without a proven pass catcher at the position.

SKAI MOORE, LB The versatile Moore led South Carolina in tackles all four years he played, becoming only the 15th player in FBS history to do that.

CHRIS LAMMONS, DB Third on the team last year with 79 tackles and was able to start at corner, safety or nickel.

TAYLOR STALLWORTH, DT Had 30 tackles and 10 QB hurries last year. South Carolina lacks depth at the position.

D.J. SMITH, S Smith had 50 tackles, fifth on the team, and four pass breakups a year ago. His departure leaves South Carolina thin on the back end of the defense.

RISING STAR

Linebacker **ROSENDO LOUIS** was committed to Florida State at one point last year. South Carolina not only flipped that verbal commitment but also got Louis in early so he could participate in spring practice. "I saw a 240-pound grown man run around and hit everything that moves," defensive coordinator Travaris Robinson said after watching Louis in practice.

tackle this season. The problem for the Gamecocks is filling in the rest of the spots. Keir Thomas probably will start at the other end spot, but there are no other SEC-proven ends on the roster. At tackle, Kobe Smith is the only player other than Kinlaw with any real experience.

LINEBACKERS Middle linebacker T.J. Brunson started all 13 games last year, and he has been anointed by the coaches as the "one voice" and leader on the defense. Brunson was second on the team with 88 tackles. Senior Bryson Allen-Williams returns after missing 10 games last year due to a shoulder injury. His experience and versatility will help make up for the loss of Skai Moore, who led the Gamecocks in tackles for four seasons before finally graduating last year. Allen-Williams probably will split time between the strong-side linebacker spot and the Buck position, a hybrid linebacker-defensive end in Muschamp's system. Senior Eldridge Thompson and sophomore Sherrod Greene are the top candidates for the weak-side spot, and early enrollee freshman Rosendo Louis is the dark-horse name to watch.



DEPTH CHART

		OFFENSE (8)		
WR	1	**Deebo Samuel (Sr.)**	13	**Shi Smith (So.)**
WR	89	**Bryan Edwards (Jr.)**	18	**OrTre Smith (So.)**
WR	8	Randrecous Davis (So.)	83	Chavis Dawkins (Jr.)
LT	74	**Dennis Daley (Sr.)**	51	Maxwell Iyama (Fr.)
LG	50	Sadarius Hutcherson (So.)	70	Hank Manos (Fr.)
C	72	**Donell Stanley (Jr.)**	60	Chandler Farrell (So.)
RG	78	**Zack Bailey (Sr.)**	76	Jordan Rhodes (Fr.)
RT	63	Blake Camper (Sr.)	71	Eric Douglas (Fr.)
TE	40	Jacob August (Sr.)	3	K.C. Crosby (Sr.)
QB	19	**Jake Bentley (Jr.)**	12	Michael Scarnecchia (Sr.)
RB	5	Rico Dowdle (Jr.)	27	Ty'Son Williams (Jr.)
		DEFENSE (5)		
DE	8	**D.J. Wonnum (Jr.)**	15	Aaron Sterling (So.)
DT	99	**Javon Kinlaw (Jr.)**	52	Kingsley Enagbare (Fr.)
DT	95	Kobe Smith (Jr.)	96	Aaron Thompson (So.)
DE	5	**Keir Thomas (Jr.)**	91	Shameik Blackshear (Jr.)
SLB	4	Bryson Allen-Williams (Sr.)	54	Davonne Bowen (Fr.)
MLB	6	**T.J. Brunson (Jr.)**	42	Rosendo Louis (Fr.)
WLB	44	Sherrod Greene (So.)	11	Eldridge Thompson (Sr.)
CB	9	Keisean Nixon (Sr.)	21	Jamyest Williams (So.)
CB	16	**Rashad Fenton (Sr.)**	28	Tavyn Jackson (Fr.)
S	22	Steven Montac (Sr.)	31	Kenneth Coleman (Jr.)
S	17	Javon Charleston (Jr.)	26	Jaylin Dickerson (Fr.)
		SPECIAL TEAMS		
K		Shane Hynes (Sr.)	KR	1 Deebo Samuel (Sr.)
P	20	Joseph Charlton (Jr.)	PR	21 Jamyest Williams (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS This is Muschamp's area of expertise, and he's still trying to get it squared away in his third season. There's a problematic lack of depth at safety, where the Gamecocks welcomed Rice graduate transfer J.T. Ibe in March. If freshman Jaylin Dickerson can get healthy, he's got a shot to make an impact, but Steven Montac and Javon Charleston likely will enter preseason camp atop the depth chart. At cornerback, seniors Rashad Fenton and Keisean Nixon (whose youth football coach was Snoop Dogg) both have plenty to prove at the position. Early enrollee freshman Israel Mukuamu will get a long look because of his 6'4" frame and athleticism. Sophomore Jamyest Williams — the top recruit in the Gamecocks' 2017 class — missed spring practice after having postseason shoulder surgery, but Muschamp talked at the time about moving him from nickel to safety upon his return. The health and development of other players likely will have a big influence on that decision.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore placekicker Parker White was 14-of-25 last year, including 4-of-14 from 40 yards and beyond, so it's no surprise that the job is up for grabs. Sophomore Alex Woznick, who started 2017 as the starter, and Kent State graduate transfer Shane Hynes will push White this fall. Punter Joseph Charlton is a known commodity who had a good year in 2017. The kickoff return game will get an instant upgrade with the return of Samuel, who might be the best in the nation at that spot.

Wonnum: Paul Abell; Edwards: Chris Keane

2018 SOUTH CAROLINA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
19	Bentley, Jake	6-4/224	Jr.	Opelika, AL
15	Dinsmore, Drew	6-6/197	Fr.	Suwanee, GA
4	Douglas, Darius	6-0/196	Fr.	Moncks Corner, SC
17	Gordon, Danny	6-0/207	Sr.	Worthington, OH
16	Hart, Bailey	6-3/173	So.	Mount Pleasant, SC
7	Joyner, Dakereon	6-1/206	Fr.	North Charleston, SC
12	Scarnecchia, Michael	6-3/211	Sr.	Fleming Island, FL
10	Urich, Jay	6-5/204	Fr.	Greenville, SC

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
33	Carroll, Slade	5-9/210	Fr.	Lexington, SC
34	Denson, Mon	5-10/211	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
5	Dowdle, Rico	6-0/218	Jr.	Asheville, NC
14	Fenwick, Deshaun	6-1/225	Fr.	Bradenton, FL
36	Freeman, C.J.	5-11/204	So.	Greensboro, NC
32	Kinlaw, Caleb	5-10/192	Sr.	Goose Creek, SC
25	Turner, A.J.	5-10/190	Jr.	Clifton, VA
31	Valentine, Lavonte	6-0/186	Fr.	Melbourne, FL
27	Williams, Ty'Son	6-0/217	Jr.	Sumter, SC

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Davis, Randrecous	5-10/182	So.	Atlanta, GA
83	Dawkins, Chavis	6-2/218	Jr.	Duncan, SC
89	Edwards, Bryan	6-3/216	Jr.	Conway, SC
80	Glenn, Shemar	6-0/176	Jr.	Union, SC
23	Moss, Eddie	6-0/199	Fr.	Honea Path, SC
81	Rush, Darius	6-2/190	Fr.	Greeleyville, SC
1	Samuel, Deebo	6-0/210	Sr.	Inman, SC
18	Smith, OrTre	6-4/220	So.	Mount Pleasant, SC
13	Smith, Shi	5-10/190	So.	Union, SC
86	Terrell, Chad	6-3/220	So.	Bogue Chitto, MS

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
40	August, Jacob	6-6/244	Sr.	Columbia, SC
3	Crosby, K.C.	6-1/233	Sr.	Bamberg, SC
82	Hinson, Evan	6-4/245	So.	Deltona, FL
41	Jenerette, Caleb	6-2/233	Fr.	Aynor, SC
84	Markway, Kyle	6-4/248	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
87	Pollard, Kiel	6-1/236	Jr.	Moultrie, GA
39	Rankin, Parker	6-1/240	So.	Camden, SC
88	Register, Will	6-4/245	Fr.	Chapin, SC

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
78	Bailey, Zack	6-6/309	Sr.	Summerville, SC
68	Campbell, Wyatt	6-6/285	Fr.	Elgin, SC
63	Camper, Blake	6-8/311	Sr.	Virginia Beach, VA
73	Carlay, Summie	6-5/285	Fr.	Laurens, SC
75	Carty, Jordon	6-7/315	Fr.	Lauderdale Lakes, FL
74	Daley, Dennis	6-6/312	Sr.	Columbia, SC
79	Derouen, Trey	6-3/320	Jr.	Lilburn, GA
71	Douglas, Eric	6-4/296	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
60	Farrell, Chandler	6-3/287	So.	Summerville, SC
67	Green, Ryan	6-2/296	Jr.	James Island, SC
50	Hutcherson, Sadarius	6-4/311	So.	Huntingdon, TN
51	Iyama, Maxwell	6-5/306	Fr.	Murfreesboro, TN
61	Johnson, Cameron	6-6/295	So.	Bennettsville, SC
70	Manos, Hank	6-4/272	Fr.	Chapin, SC
55	Pellage, Christian	6-7/298	Jr.	Brooksville, FL
66	Putnam, Will	6-5/300	So.	Harrisburg, NC
76	Rhodes, Jordan	6-4/315	Fr.	Fairburn, GA
72	Stanley, Donell	6-3/318	Jr.	Floydale, SC
77	Young, Malik	6-3/292	Sr.	Pelzer, SC

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
91	Blackshear, Shameik	6-5/267	Jr.	Bluffton, SC
61	Duncan, Javion	5-11/270	Sr.	Simpsonville, SC
52	Enagbare, Kingsley	6-4/257	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
35	Fennell, Daniel	6-2/246	Jr.	Loganville, GA
50	Gentry, Griffin	6-1/268	So.	Birmingham, AL
19	Johnson, Brad	6-2/240	So.	Pendleton, SC
92	Johnson, Tyreek	6-3/257	Fr.	Sumter, SC
99	Kinlaw, Javon	6-6/302	Jr.	Charleston, SC
57	Outlaw, Jazuun	6-2/227	So.	Dillon, SC
95	Smith, Kobe	6-2/293	Jr.	Lawrenceville, GA
15	Sterling, Aaron	6-1/240	So.	Atlanta, GA
5	Thomas, Keir	6-2/265	Jr.	Miami, FL
96	Thompson, Aaron	6-3/300	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
94	Webb, M.J.	6-3/293	Fr.	Rutledge, GA
8	Wonnum, D.J.	6-5/258	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
4	Allen-Williams, Bryson	6-1/231	Sr.	Ellenwood, GA
54	Bowen, Davonne	6-1/218	Fr.	Simpsonville, SC
6	Brunson, T.J.	6-1/225	Jr.	Columbia, SC
39	Davis Jr., Stephen	6-3/212	So.	Irmo, SC
58	Davis, Cole	6-0/205	Fr.	St. Johns, FL
59	DeLoach, Alex	6-3/213	Fr.	Summerville, SC
45	Eason-Riddle, Spencer	6-0/220	So.	Raleigh, NC
44	Greene, Sherrod	6-1/225	So.	Rocky Mount, NC
53	Jones, Ernest	6-2/224	Fr.	Waycross, GA
51	Langford, Mitch	5-10/203	Sr.	Richburg, SC
42	Louis, Rosendo	6-2/242	Fr.	Deerfield Beach, FL
48	McGonigal, Sean	6-1/220	Fr.	Myrtle Beach, SC
41	Rogers, Chase	6-4/218	So.	Sumter, SC
30	Staley, Damani	6-0/225	So.	Columbia, SC
11	Thompson, Eldridge	6-1/223	Sr.	Houston, TX

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
23	Banks, Korey	5-11/184	So.	Tyrone, GA
33	Brown, Zay	5-11/198	Fr.	Athens, GA
17	Charleston, Javon	6-1/186	Jr.	Gurnee, IL
31	Coleman, Kenneth	6-0/186	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
26	Dickerson, Jaylin	6-1/192	Fr.	Southern Pines, NC
16	Fenton, Rashad	5-11/186	Sr.	Miami, FL
47	Foster, Jaylan	5-10/190	So.	Duncan, SC
	Ibe, J.T.	6-0/200	Sr.	Mansfield, TX
28	Jackson, Tavyn	5-9/185	Fr.	Tallahassee, FL
22	Montac, Steven	5-10/188	Sr.	Covington, GA
24	Mukuamu, Israel	6-4/196	Fr.	Bossier City, LA
9	Nixon, Keisean	5-10/195	Sr.	Compton, CA
10	Roderick, R.J.	6-0/210	Fr.	Summerville, SC
40	Senn, Jason	5-8/186	Jr.	Beaufort, SC
29	Wilder, Antoine	5-10/198	Jr.	Riverdale, GA
21	Williams, Jamyest	5-8/175	So.	Dacula, GA

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
85	Almond, Michael (K/P)	6-3/237	Jr.	North Augusta, SC
45	Asbury, Ben (LS)	6-0/205	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
20	Charlton, Joseph (K/P)	6-5/187	Jr.	Columbia, SC
62	Chiazza, Brandon (K)	5-11/172	Fr.	Malvern, PA
46	Freeman, Harrison (LS)	6-3/225	So.	Raleigh, NC
	Hynes, Shane (K)	5-10/166	Sr.	Clarkston, MI
49	Smith, Matthew (LS)	6-0/206	Fr.	Roswell, GA
47	Snow, Austin (K)	6-1/166	Fr.	Powdersville, SC
48	Tommie, Will (K)	5-10/160	Jr.	Greenwood, SC
43	White, Parker (K)	6-5/196	So.	Mount Pleasant, SC
42	Woznick, Alexander (K)	5-11/163	So.	Greenville, SC

SCOUTING THE GAMECOCKS

Opposing Coaches Size up South Carolina

"I think they are very good. I know they had some games during the regular season they could have lost, like the Tennessee game and the Louisiana Tech game and even the Vanderbilt game, but they won them, so give them credit. I don't think they were a fluke at all. You ask me right now, I think they are the second-best team in the East. ... They led the conference in takeaways last year. There is a mindset there with (Will) Muschamp and T-Rob (Travaris Robinson) about what they want to do on defense. They are very simple on defense, but they play fast and they execute well. ... This league has some good young quarterbacks, and Jake Bentley is one of the best. He's really, really good. He's a tough dude who makes all of the right plays. He has some great leadership characteristics. He can run enough to be a pain in the butt. ... Their best receiver (Deebo Samuel) got hurt last year; when he comes back, he will really help them. He's a great weapon on offense and in the return game. ... They will miss the tight end, (Hayden) Hurst. He was a good player, but (Bryan) Edwards is back at receiver. He's very good. ... They need to run the ball better, but they had some injuries there last year. They should be better. ... People questioned the (Muschamp) hire, but he's getting the job done."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 5-3 SEC

Sept. 2	vs. NC State #	W	35-28
Sept. 9	at Missouri	W	31-13
Sept. 16	Kentucky	L	13-23
Sept. 23	Louisiana Tech	W	17-16
Sept. 30	at Texas A&M	L	17-24
Oct. 7	Arkansas	W	48-22
Oct. 14	at Tennessee	W	15-9
Oct. 28	Vanderbilt	W	34-27
Nov. 4	at Georgia	L	10-24
Nov. 11	Florida	W	28-20
Nov. 18	Wofford	W	31-10
Nov. 25	Clemson	L	10-34
Jan. 1	vs. Michigan %	W	26-19

#Charlotte %Outback Bowl



BRYAN EDWARDS

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jake Bentley	394	245	2,794	18	12
RUSHING	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
A.J. Turner	98	531	5.4	3	
Ty'Son Williams	95	471	5.0	1	
Rico Dowdle	66	251	3.8	2	
Mon Denson	41	152	3.7	2	
RECEIVING	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Bryan Edwards	64	793	12.4	5	
Hayden Hurst	44	559	12.7	2	
OrTre Smith	30	326	10.9	3	
Shi Smith	29	409	14.1	3	
A.J. Turner	18	117	6.5	0	

KICKING: Parker White, 14-25 FGs, 26-26 PATs, 68 points

TACKLES: Skai Moore, 93; T.J. Brunson, 88

SACKS: D.J. Wonnum, 6.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Skai Moore, 3; Steven Montac, 3

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.2 ppg	12	99
Rushing	122.2 ypg	12	111
Passing	214.9 ypg	6	77
Total	337.1 ypg	12	109
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	20.7 ppg	5	25
Rushing	141.1 ypg	6	39
Passing	226.0 ypg	10	69
Total	367.1 ypg	7	44
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+11	+0.85	2	13

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

COACH DAD At least Bobby Bentley got to coach his son in college for one game. Bentley, a long-time successful high school coach in the state, is now the Gamecocks running backs coach. He was moved to coaching quarterbacks, including his son (and the team's starter) Jake Bentley, for the Outback Bowl after the firing of Kurt Roper. Jake Bentley expressed a desire for his dad to keep that role full time, but head coach Will Muschamp hired Dan Werner to coach quarterbacks and moved the elder Bentley back to the running backs job.

THE NEW GUY Werner came to South Carolina from Alabama, where he was an offensive analyst for the Crimson Tide. Before that, he was the offensive coordinator at Ole Miss under Hugh Freeze. Werner will not call plays for the Gamecocks, but he's expected to have a big impact on the playbook nonetheless. Werner arrived in time for spring practice and brought a wealth of experience in the RPO (run-pass option) game, something South Carolina is likely to employ more often in 2018.

SPEED KILLS The biggest athletic improvement in South Carolina's roster since Muschamp took over has been team speed, and the Gamecocks expect that to be very evident on their defense and special teams this year. "The speed of our team is just crazy," senior linebacker Bryson Allen-Williams says. "I was talking to some of the older guys who left this year, just looking at our spring roster from two years ago compared to now, it's night and day just seeing the team speed we have, how physical we are at the point of attack."

DOWN THE ROAD It won't be long before the Gamecocks have to start thinking about hanging onto defensive coordinator Travaris Robinson, who fits the mold of a lot of successful and recent head coaching hires in college football. Robinson is dynamic and an excellent recruiter, and his South Carolina defenses have performed well the last two years. The entire coaching staff got a raise in the offseason, and Robinson now makes $1.2 million annually. It will be interesting to see how high the Gamecocks are willing to go with that salary when Robinson starts getting other offers.

SPEAKING OF RAISES Muschamp's salary also was increased in the offseason. After making $3 million annually in his first two seasons, he was given a new deal that will pay him $4.2 million for the 2018 season and increase by $200,000 in each of the following five seasons.

THE ARMS RACE The Gamecocks' new $50 million football operations building is expected to be completed shortly after the 2018 season is complete. The facility will be "a game changer" for South Carolina, Muschamp says. The building will include the state's largest weight room, something the Gamecocks haven't been shy about trumpeting after in-state rival Clemson recently finished its own football Taj Mahal.



A.J. TURNER

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.2	50
Defense	28.4	38
Margin	**+1.8**	**44**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	41.8%	64
Defense	40.4%	60
Margin	**+1.4%**	**63**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.5	86
Defense	5.2	35
Margin	**+0.3**	**54**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.2	93
Defense	3.9	24
Margin	**+0.3**	**53**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	7.2	12
Actual	+11	13
Margin	**+3.8**	**30**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

+3.8

Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, South Carolina's turnover margin should have been about plus-7.2. Instead, it was plus-11. That's a positive difference of 3.8, second best in the SEC and 30th in the country, and it certainly helped in putting together a 6–1 record in one-possession games.

1.5

New offensive coordinator Bryan McClendon's primary goal: create more easy points via big play. South Carolina averaged just 1.5 gains per game of 30-plus yards, 112th in FBS and last in the SEC, and they had just five gains of 40-plus yards all season, tied for fewest in the country. The return of a healthy Deebo Samuel will help, but will that be enough?

1.2

As bad as South Carolina was at producing big plays in 2017, opponents were even worse thanks to a Gamecock defense that allowed only 1.2 gains per game of 30-plus yards, fifth in the country. How much will the loss of linebacker Skai Moore and defensive backs Chris Lammons, D.J. Smith and JaMarcus King impact their magnificent big-play prevention efforts?

3.6

The South Carolina run game was never great, but it was really, really bad in losses. Gamecock backs averaged just 56.3 rushing yards per game and a paltry 3.6 yards per carry in four losses but in nine wins averaged 136.3 yards per game and a much healthier 5.1 yards per carry.

Paul Abell

2018 SIGNEES

The recruiting rankings of the Gamecocks 2018 class — 19th in the nation and seventh in the SEC, according to the 247Sports Composite — won't blow anyone away, especially with South Carolina recruiting in the shadow of both Georgia and Clemson. However, Will Muschamp likes his group. "Like I say every year, we will know about this class in two or three years, but as far as the critical factors that we look for at every position, we hit more and more of what we are looking for in our program," he says.

It was the third recruiting class for Muschamp, who inherited a roster from Steve Spurrier that had slipped below the competitive level in the SEC. "You're never going to be satisfied, but standing in our offseason program Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of this week as opposed to two years ago is night and day," Muschamp says. "As far as the girth of our football team, the length, the athleticism, the guys that jump out at you athletically. They compare very favorably to different places I have been."

The Gamecocks signed nine four-star prospects according to the 247Sports Composite — defensive lineman Rick Sandidge, wide receiver Josh Vann, offensive linemen Dylan Wonnum and Jovaughn Gwyn, quarterback Dakereon Joyner, cornerback Jaycee Horn, defensive end Kingsley Enagbare and linebacker Rosendo Louis. Joyner, a dual threat, is the name that got the fan base most excited, and he might have a role in a specialty package this year.

In all, the Gamecocks inked 10 offensive and defensive linemen, which was the biggest point of emphasis in this class. Maybe the best part of the class from Muschamp's perspective was the fact that 13 players enrolled early and were able to participate in spring practice.

"I have never been a part of a mid-year class this big," Muschamp says. "I have never seen a mid-year come in and it not be a benefit to the student-athlete. I think it's a very beneficial process."

BY POSITION	
Offensive Linemen	6
Defensive Linemen	4
Defensive Backs	4
Wide Receivers	3
Running Backs	2
Linebackers	2
Quarterbacks	1
BY STATE	
Georgia	7
South Carolina	7
Florida	3
North Carolina	2
Louisiana	1
Tennessee	1
Virginia	1

Recruit Spotlight

Rick Sandidge

DT • Concord, NC

Like most of the teams in the SEC, South Carolina signed most of its players in the early signing period. In fact, the Gamecocks only signed two players on February's traditional National Signing Day — Rick Sandidge and Dylan Wonnum. Both were four-star prospects and good gets, but Sandidge was the top target for two reasons. First, at 6'5", 285 pounds, he could have an impact this year at a position of dire need — defensive tackle.

"It's important to me to play right away," Sandidge says "but I know I'm going to get thrown on the ground. But that's just like me coming into high school my freshman year. I was getting thrown all around. It's the same deal but at a bigger level."

The second reason Sandidge was so important to South Carolina was that conference rival Georgia also made him a big emphasis in the second signing period. Being able to keep Sandidge away from the Bulldogs helped the Gamecocks and stopped — at least for a moment — Georgia's momentum on the trail.

Sandidge, who played at Concord (N.C.) High School, was ranked the No. 2 defensive tackle in the nation by Rivals.

"He's a very powerful man inside," South Carolina coach Will Muschamp says. "He can obviously anchor, but he has wiggle enough to slide out and play end in our regular package similar to what we have done with other guys before. He's an athletic big man that can run and push the pocket."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Wyatt Campbell	OT	6-6/285	Elgin, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	931
Jabari Ellis	DT	6-2/280	Vance, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	51*
Kingsley Enagbare	DE	6-4/257	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	269
Deshaun Fenwick	RB	6-1/225	Bradenton, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	538
Jesus Gibbs	OT	6-3/283	Dumfries, VA	★★★	★★★	★★★	784
Jonathan Gipson	CB	6-2/182	Hoschton, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	387
Jovaughn Gwyn	OG	6-2/291	Charlotte, NC	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	347
Jaycee Horn	CB	6-0/190	Alpharetta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	209
Maxwell Iyama	OT	6-5/306	Murfreesboro, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★★	498
Tyquan Johnson	WR	6-2/193	Sylvania, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	641
Tyreek Johnson	DL	6-3/262	Sumter, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	987
Ernest Jones	OLB	6-2/224	Waycross, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	929
Dakereon Joyner	QB	6-1/200	North Charleston, SC	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	206
Rosendo Louis	ILB	6-2/242	Deerfield Beach, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	352
Hank Manos	C	6-4/272	Chapin, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	503
Israel Mukuamu	S	6-4/186	Bossier City, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	658
RJ Roderick	S	6-0/210	Summerville, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,244
Darius Rush	WR	6-2/190	Greeleyville, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,055
Rick Sandidge	DT	6-5/285	Concord, NC	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	141
Lavonte Valentine	RB	6-0/186	Melbourne, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	610
Josh Vann	WR	5-11/175	Tucker, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	146
Dylan Wonnum	OT	6-5/258	Stone Mountain, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	148

*junior college transfer

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

National Forecast: 56 /// SEC East Prediction: 6

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. West Virginia #
Sept. 8	East Tennessee St.
Sept. 15	UTEP
Sept. 22	Florida
Sept. 29	at Georgia
Oct. 13	at Auburn
Oct. 20	Alabama
Oct. 27	at South Carolina
Nov. 3	Charlotte
Nov. 10	Kentucky
Nov. 17	Missouri
Nov. 24	at Vanderbilt

#Charlotte

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 5-7, 2-6 SEC

The Volunteers won nine games as recently as 2016, but getting to six victories would be a step in the right direction for new coach Jeremy Pruitt. The first-year coach inherits a team with major question marks on both sides of the ball, along with one of the SEC's toughest schedules. The defense struggled to stop the run and gave up 34.8 points per game in SEC play. Pruitt's background and the return of linebacker Darrin Kirkland Jr. from injury should help this unit, but concerns remain at cornerback and in the trenches. The line of scrimmage is also a concern for the offense, especially with the uncertainty surrounding standout tackle Trey Smith. The addition of quarterback Keller Chryst and return of receiver Jauan Jennings will bolster a struggling offense. Will it be enough to get the Vols to six wins? Stay tuned.

Postseason: None

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Jeremy Pruitt

RECORD AT SCHOOL
First Season

CAREER RECORD
First Season

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Tyson Helton

DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Chris Rumph, Kevin Sherrer

LOCATION
Knoxville, TN

STADIUM
Neyland Stadium (102,455)

Tennessee football is headed in a new direction under Jeremy Pruitt, a decidedly defensive one that Vols fans hope will return the program to top-25 status.

Cornbread and country music are two of Pruitt's favorite things off the field, but on the field the 44-year-old Alabama native and former Crimson Tide defensive back demands a physical style not seen on Rocky Top since Phillip Fulmer was head coach.

"We want to create an aggressive style of defense, where we dictate what the offense does," Pruitt says. "We are going to walk up to the line of scrimmage and challenge our opponents."



NIGEL WARRIOR

The Tennessee players have impressed their new coach with their attitude. "I sense a bunch of guys that are hungry," Pruitt says, "and maybe have a chip on their shoulder."

QUARTERBACKS "Unsettled" is the only way to describe the quarterback situation with Stanford graduate transfer Keller Chryst and 2018 signee JT Shrout arriving in June to challenge sophomores Jarrett Guarantano and Will McBride. The Vols' switch from a spread to pro-style offense will be accented by a more vertical passing game, according to coordinator Tyson Helton. "You have to throw that sucker down there and make everyone stand up and take a deep breath," Helton says. "Whether we catch it or not, you have to throw it down there." Tennessee ranked 104th in the nation in passing yards per attempt last season (6.5 yards) — a far cry from where Helton's USC offense finished in 2017 (14th, 8.5 yards per attempt). Chryst was 11–2 as a starter in the Cardinal's pro style attack, and that experience gives him an advantage in the QB competition. Guarantano added 18 pounds to his athletic frame (6'4", 218) and still possesses a strong arm and decent mobility. McBride exhibited a quick release and gunslinger mentality in the two games he played as a true freshman. "With that group, as a whole, we'll find guys we can win with," Helton says. "Our offense is going to be an exciting offense." The Vols ranked 109th in the nation in passing efficiency last season, with only Mississippi State (112th) and Florida (113th) faring worse in the SEC. Helton's offense at USC ranked 27th.

RUNNING BACKS Pruitt favors a punishing ground game, and position changes and early recruiting philosophy indicate that he's looking for runners in the mold of Alabama's power backs. Sophomore Ty Chandler might still present the best option, even though the explosive Middle Tennessee product hovers around 5'11", 200. Chandler's north-south running style is such that he figures to benefit from lining up behind a quarterback under center — as opposed to beside a quarterback in the shotgun formation. Tim Jordan and Trey Coleman are two other options in the Vols' stable. Though limited in experience, Jordan and Coleman have shown they can hit the line hard. More talent is on the way in the form of Michigan State graduate transfer Madre London and 2018 signee Jeremy Banks. London was a starter in East Lansing prior to a knee and ankle injury his sophomore year, after which he returned to a platoon situation with the Spartans. Banks, at 6'2", 215, has the prototypical size that Tennessee seems intent on getting at the position.

Chandler: Tom DiPace; Warrior: Michael Wade/Icon via AP

RECEIVERS Jauan Jennings, one of the SEC's top game changers, returned to the roster in the spring after a brief dismissal following a social media meltdown involving the previous staff last November. The 6'3", 220-pound Jennings is as physical as any receiver in the nation. He plays with a linebacker mentality and features a vertical leap that strikes fear into defensive backs who witnessed his Hail Mary catch to beat Georgia in 2016. Gifted juniors Marquez Callaway and Brandon Johnson will benefit most from Jennings' return. Callaway (who had four catches for 115 yards in Week 1 against Georgia Tech last year) and Johnson — long and agile — look to take advantage of the extra attention Jennings will no doubt receive. Tennessee's tight ends will have a meatier, heftier look, though the Vols do have some intriguing matchup options. Dominick Wood-Anderson, the No. 1-rated tight end in the junior college ranks, is scheduled to arrive in June after picking the Vols over Alabama.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The greatest concern involves the depth and lack of experience up front for the Vols, particularly with the future of budding star Trey Smith in doubt. Smith, rated the top freshman in the SEC by Pro Football Focus last season, missed spring drills on account of a non-orthopedic medical condition. If Smith can't return, junior Drew Richmond will get yet another chance to live up to his five-star billing at left tackle after two unremarkable seasons. Sophomore Ryan Johnson anchors the line from the center position, having proven himself an intelligent player with a chippy style of play. Johnson could be flanked by sophomore guards Riley Locklear and Devante Brooks, both of whom were pressed into starting roles last November on account of Tennessee's multiple injuries. The Vols were down to four healthy scholarship offensive linemen at one point in 2017. Junior Marcus Tatum is slotted at right tackle, where his long arms and quick feet have made him effective when he has been healthy. Redshirt freshman K'Rojhn Calbert and junior Chance Hall are projected to compete at guard after getting cleared to return from knee rehabilitations.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN "The first thing we're going to talk about is being able to stop the run," Pruitt says of his defensive philosophy. "If you can stop the run you have a chance to have success. I don't think it's any secret you've got to be good up front." That's especially true of defenses that use just three down lineman, as Pruitt has been known to do at his coordinator stops. Seniors Shy Tuttle and Alexis Johnson give the Vols two space eaters who have flashed the potential to be effective inside, along with redshirt freshman Eric Crosby. Tennessee could be a bit undersized at the other two defensive line positions, though Kyle Phillips and Jonathan Kong-



RB **TY CHANDLER**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY VOLUNTEERS

JAUAN JENNINGS, WR Ready to assume playmaking duties once again after being sidelined by a broken wrist suffered in the 2017 season-opening game.

DANIEL BITULI, MLB Tennessee tackles leader last season opened with 23 in the Vols' Week 1 win over Georgia Tech.

NIGEL WARRIOR, FS Reliable open-field tackler with NFL athleticism, the son of Tennessee legend Dale Carter is ready to live up to his recruiting hype.

DARRELL TAYLOR, OLB The most aggressive player in the Vols' front seven; Taylor's mean streak gets moved from end to outside linebacker.

MARCUS TATUM, OL The Vols' thin front desperately needs Tatum to fill out his 6'6" frame and become the NFL prospect he's projected to be.

KEY LOSSES

RASHAAN GAULDEN, DB New coach Jeremy Pruitt would have loved to coach this standout defensive back.

JOHN KELLY, RB Tennessee's workhorse back led the team in rushing (189 carries for 778 yards) while also sharing the team lead with 37 receptions.

ETHAN WOLF, TE Team captain showed grit his senior season, playing through injuries and showing the ability to block as well as catch the football.

TREVOR DANIEL, P Finished second in the nation with a 47.5-yard average and was one of only four Vols players invited to NFL Combine.

JASHON ROBERTSON, OL Versatile offensive lineman made 45 career starts at guard and center and was leader in O-line meeting room.

RISING STAR

Sophomore tailback **TY CHANDLER** was a bright spot in 2017, showing breakaway speed on a 91-yard kick return for a TD and rushing for 120 yards and two TDs in his only start. Chandler is a home-run threat each carry, exhibiting great burst and leg drive. He could be the program's next 1,000-yard back.

bo were highly touted recruits upon arriving, both boasting impressive athleticism and physiques. Sophomore Matthew Butler has shown a good motor and needs only to add more size and power.

LINEBACKERS Junior Darrell Taylor is making one of the more important transitions from defensive end to outside linebacker, where he'll look to apply his aggressive, attacking tactics from a stand-up position. Taylor made the game-winning stop in the Vols' overtime win against Georgia Tech last season, one of the few defensive highlights of 2017 Likewise, Daniel Bituli's 23-tackle effort in the victory over the Yellow Jackets made waves, though the middle linebacker's 97-yard interception return for a touchdown against Alabama was also worthy of the highlight reels. Junior Quart'e Sapp lined up at inside linebacker beside Bituli in spring drills. Sapp, who missed most of his redshirt freshman year with a knee injury, will work to fend off hard-luck



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)					
WR	15	Jauan Jennings (Jr.)	5	Josh Palmer (So.)	
WR	1	**Marquez Callaway (Jr.)**	8	Latrell Williams (So.)	
WR	7	**Brandon Johnson (Jr.)**	10	Tyler Byrd (Jr.)	
LT	73	**Trey Smith (So.)**	51	**Drew Richmond (Jr.)**	
LG	77	Devante Brooks (So.)	74	K'Rojhn Calbert (So.)	
C	70	Ryan Johnson (So.)	78	Ollie Lane (Fr.)	
RG	56	Riley Locklear (So.)	75	Jerome Carvin (Fr.)	
RT	68	Marcus Tatum (Jr.)		Jahmir Johnson (So.)	
TE		Dominick Wood-Anderson	81	Austin Pope (So.)	
QB		Keller Chryst (Sr.)	2	Jarrett Guarantano (So.)	
RB	3	Ty Chandler (So.)	9	Tim Jordan (So.)	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	5	Kyle Phillips (Sr.)	56	Matthew Butler (So.)	
DT	2	Shy Tuttle (Sr.)	99	Eric Crosby (Fr.)	
DE	1	**Jonathan Kongbo (Sr.)**	98	Alexis Johnson (Sr.)	
OLB	19	**Darrell Taylor (Jr.)**	13	Deandre Johnson (So.)	
ILB	14	**Quart'e Sapp (Jr.)**	34	Darrin Kirkland Jr. (Sr.)	
ILB	35	**Daniel Bituli (Jr.)**	23	Will Ignont (So.)	
OLB	11	Austin Smith (Jr.)	8	Jordan Allen (So.)	
CB	15	Shawn Shamburger (So.)	27	Carlin Fils-aime (Jr.)	
CB	28	Baylen Buchanan (Jr.)	3	Marquill Osborne (Jr.)	
SS	18	**Nigel Warrior (Jr.)**	26	Theo Jackson (So.)	
FS	22	**Micah Abernathy (Sr.)**	24	Todd Kelly Jr. (Sr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	30	Brent Cimaglia (So.)	KR	3 Ty Chandler (So.)	
P	37	Paxton Brooks (Fr.)	PR	1 Marquez Callaway (Jr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

senior Darrin Kirkland Jr., another talented pro prospect who has spent most of his career battling knee injuries. Austin Smith and Deandre Johnson are two more candidates capable of filling the new role of outside linebacker in Pruitt's 3-4 scheme, along with four-star junior college transfer Jordan Allen and incoming freshman JJ Peterson.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Pruitt, a secondary coach by trade, is not easily impressed with defensive backs. That's why it spoke volumes that junior safety Nigel Warrior was selected to grace the cover of the spring media guide two-plus years after rejecting Pruitt's recruiting pitch at Georgia and choosing to follow in his father's footsteps at Tennessee. Senior Micah Abernathy held the starting safety spot alongside Warrior last season, but he'll be challenged by 2016 tackles leader Todd Kelly Jr., who's returning from a knee injury. The cornerback positions are open. Sophomores Shawn Shamburger and Maleik Gray and juniors Baylen Buchanan and Marquill Osborne are pushing to win starting jobs.

SPECIALISTS Tennessee's strong special teams tradition will be challenged with new kickers, punters and return men. Sophomore kicker Brent Cimaglia made five starts in 2017 and made 8-of-13 field-goal attempts. Michigan graduate transfer Ryan Tice is a walk-on with two years of eligibility remaining who hopes to challenge Cimaglia. Incoming freshman Paxton Brooks is expected to assume the punting duties. Brooks, an Under Armour All-American, was rated the No. 2 punter in the 2018 class by Kohl's Professional Football Camps. Callaway handled punt return duties last season, with Chandler taking on the majority of kick returns after All-American Evan Berry was limited to three games. Tyler Byrd is another experienced option in the return game.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 TENNESSEE ROSTER

	QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
	Chryst, Keller	6-5/234	Sr.	Lake Forest, IL
2	Guarantano, Jarrett	6-4/218	So.	Lodi, NJ
14	Jancek, Zac	6-4/214	Jr.	Knoxville, TN
17	McBride, Will	6-1/195	So.	League City, TX

	RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3	Chandler, Ty	5-11/195	So.	Nashville, TN
28	Christian, James	5-10/205	Jr.	Booneville, MS
24	Coleman, Trey	5-11/214	So.	West Monroe, LA
9	Jordan, Tim	5-11/196	So.	Bartow, FL
	London, Madre	6-1/218	Sr.	Little Rock, AR
42	Omer, Chip	6-0/200	So.	Nashville, TN

	RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
10	Byrd, Tyler	6-0/195	Jr.	Naples, FL
1	Callaway, Marquez	6-2/199	Jr.	Warner Robins, GA
34	Elion, Malik	5-7/185	Sr.	Memphis, TN
18	Fant, Princeton	6-3/216	So.	Nashville, TN
31	Henderson, D.J.	6-1/183	Sr.	Lyman, SC
15	Jennings, Jauan	6-3/220	Jr.	Murfreesboro, TN
7	Johnson, Brandon	6-2/193	Jr.	Plantation, FL
21	Jones, Jacquez	5-10/165	So.	Clearwater, FL
83	Melton, Cooper	6-2/196	So.	Cleveland, TN
13	Mize Jr., Richard	5-10/171	So.	Tampa, FL
11	Murphy, Jordan	5-11/170	So.	Hattiesburg, MS
5	Palmer, Josh	6-2/198	So.	Brampton, ON
26	Shoop, Jay	6-1/175	So.	Nashville, TN
6	Taylor, Alontae	6-0/182	Fr.	Manchester, TN
8	Williams, Latrell	5-11/175	So.	Lake City, FL

	TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
84	Brown, James	6-3/222	So.	Orlando, FL
88	Bumphus, LaTrell	6-3/258	So.	Savannah, TN
86	Craig, Andrew	6-5/240	So.	Knoxville, TN
81	Pope, Austin	6-4/230	So.	Knoxville, TN
87	Warren, Jacob	6-6/211	Fr.	Knoxville, TN
80	Wolf, Eli	6-4/224	Jr.	Minster, OH

	OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
77	Brooks, Devante	6-5/282	So.	Bowie, MD
74	Calbert, K'Rojhn	6-5/316	So.	McMinnville, TN
75	Carvin, Jerome	6-4/330	Fr.	Cordova, TN
50	Cave, Joey	6-5/295	So.	Knoxville, TN
69	Garvey, Brian	6-4/290	So.	Brentwood, TN
76	Hall, Chance	6-4/315	Sr.	Roanoke, VA
70	Johnson, Ryan	6-6/300	So.	Brentwood, TN
67	Keeler, Joe	6-6/279	Jr.	Arden, NC
78	Lane, Ollie	6-5/285	Fr.	Corryton, TN
56	Locklear, Riley	6-5/295	So.	Huntington, WV
57	Niehaus, Nathan	6-6/285	So.	Cincinnati, OH
51	Richmond, Drew	6-5/309	Jr.	Memphis, TN
73	Smith, Trey	6-6/320	So.	Jackson, TN
68	Tatum, Marcus	6-6/281	Jr.	Ormond Beach, FL

	DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
97	Bain, Paul	6-5/290	Sr.	Powder Springs, GA
88	Benedict, Brandon	6-2/250	So.	Nashville, TN
95	Bennett, Kivon	6-1/275	So.	Hollywood, FL
48	Blakely, Ja'Quain	6-2/254	So.	Moultrie, GA
56	Butler, Matthew	6-4/274	So.	Raleigh, NC
99	Crosby, Eric	6-1/336	Fr.	Virginia Beach, VA
90	Emerson, Greg	6-3/280	Fr.	Jackson, TN
98	Johnson, Alexis	6-4/300	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
1	Kongbo, Jonathan	6-6/264	Sr.	Surrey, BC
5	Phillips, Kyle	6-4/263	Sr.	Nashville, TN
52	Smith, Maurese	6-3/324	So.	Toney, AL
44	Thaxton, Ryan	6-4/236	So.	Alexandria, VA
2	Tuttle, Shy	6-2/308	Sr.	Midway, NC

	LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Allen, Jordan	6-5/230	So.	Fairfield, CA
17	Bates, Dillon	6-3/224	Sr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
35	Bituli, Daniel	6-3/240	Jr.	Antioch, TN
40	Humphrey, Nick	6-1/205	So.	Monroe, MI
23	Ignont, Will	6-1/228	So.	Huntsville, AL
13	Johnson, Deandre	6-4/258	So.	Miami, FL
34	Kirkland Jr., Darrin	6-1/238	Sr.	Indianapolis, IN
47	Knoll, Landon	6-3/217	Jr.	Nashville, TN
38	Page III, Solon	6-2/207	So.	Marietta, GA
21	Reid, Shanon	6-0/215	So.	Lehigh Acres, FL
14	Sapp, Quart'e	6-2/226	Jr.	Alpharetta, GA
11	Smith, Austin	6-3/236	Jr.	Buford, GA
19	Taylor, Darrell	6-4/254	Jr.	Waverly, VA

	DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
22	Abernathy, Micah	6-0/203	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
36	Bailey, Terrell	5-11/178	So.	Harvey, LA
28	Buchanan, Baylen	5-11/185	Jr.	Lawrenceville, GA
27	Fils-aime, Carlin	5-11/183	Jr.	Naples, FL
33	Gatewood, MaLeik	5-10/190	Jr.	Memphis, TN
4	Gray, Maleik	6-2/191	So.	Lavergne, TN
26	Jackson, Theo	6-1/178	So.	Nashville, TN
24	Kelly Jr., Todd	5-11/200	Sr.	Knoxville, TN
20	Labruzza, Cheyenne	6-0/188	So.	Albany, LA
3	Osborne, Marquill	5-11/188	Jr.	Cornelius, NC
43	Powers, Jake	6-0/193	So.	Memphis, TN
15	Shamburger, Shawn	6-0/191	So.	Moultrie, GA
18	Warrior, Nigel	6-0/194	Jr.	Duluth, GA

	SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
37	Brooks, Paxton (P)	6-5/170	Fr.	West Columbia, SC
30	Cimaglia, Brent (K)	6-1/193	So.	Franklin, TN
47	Doyle, Joe (P)	6-0/196	So.	Knoxville, TN
46	Lovingood, Riley (LS)	6-0/210	Jr.	Hendersonville, TN
52	Medford, Elijah (LS)	5-9/204	Sr.	Burlington, NC
43	Toser, Laszlo (K)	5-8/181	Jr.	Ooltewah, TN

SCOUTING THE VOLUNTEERS

Opposing Coaches Size up Tennessee

"There are some really good quarterbacks in this league, and not many were more highly ranked than Jarrett Guarantano. But he sure didn't play very well last year when he got a chance. He holds onto the ball too long and takes some unnecessary hits. He has to step his game up. People thought he would step in and be like Joshua Dobbs, but Dobbs is a better thrower than people thought, and he made plays with his feet. Guarantano, I don't think, is a dual threat like people think. He has a good, live arm, but he's not a dynamic spread-offense runner. To be fair, I don't know that he is surrounded by a lot of weapons on the perimeter. ... It will be interesting to see what they do with Tyson Helton as the coordinator. I think they are going to more of a pro-style or traditional offense. We'll see if that fits with what Guarantano can do well. ... Coach (Jeremy) Pruitt and Kevin Sherrer are obviously very good defensive coaches. It will be interesting to see how they transition to what Tennessee has done in the past few years to their scheme. ... They have done a poor job stopping the run in the past few years. I don't think they are very big or strong in their front seven, and I don't think they have the players on the perimeter at the corner positions that Coach Pruitt and that group is used to having. I think they are okay at safety. They have a good player in Nigel Warrior. He's someone they can build around. ... Darrin Kirkland is a key guy at linebacker. If he comes back from injury, he has the potential to be an upper-level SEC linebacker. But other than that, I don't see a lot of playmakers on that defense."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 0-8 SEC

Sept. 4	vs. Georgia Tech # (ot)	W	42-41
Sept. 9	Indiana State	W	42-7
Sept. 16	at Florida	L	20-26
Sept. 23	Massachusetts	W	17-13
Sept. 30	Georgia	L	0-41
Oct. 14	South Carolina	L	9-15
Oct. 21	at Alabama	L	7-45
Oct. 28	at Kentucky	L	26-29
Nov. 4	Southern Miss	W	24-10
Nov. 11	at Missouri	L	17-50
Nov. 18	LSU	L	10-30
Nov. 25	Vanderbilt	L	24-42

#Atlanta



DARRIN KIRKLAND JR.

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jarrett Guarantano	**139**	**86**	**997**	**4**	**2**
Quinten Dormady	137	76	925	6	6
Will McBride	**40**	**17**	**152**	**1**	**2**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
John Kelly	189	778	4.1	9
Ty Chandler	**71**	**305**	**4.3**	**2**
Carlin Fils-aime	**31**	**215**	**6.9**	**2**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Brandon Johnson	**37**	**482**	**13.0**	**1**
John Kelly	37	299	8.1	0
Marquez Callaway	**24**	**406**	**16.9**	**5**
Ethan Wolf	24	246	10.3	3

KICKING: Aaron Medley, 6-8 FGs, 25-25 PATs, 43 points

TACKLES: **Daniel Bituli, 90; Nigel Warrior, 83**

SACKS: Colton Jumper, 4.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Five players tied with 1

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	19.8 ppg	14	118
Rushing	117.4 ypg	13	113
Passing	173.7 ypg	13	109
Total	291.1 ypg	14	125
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.1 ppg	9	83
Rushing	251.3 ypg	14	126
Passing	161.7 ypg	1	3
Total	412.9 ypg	10	82
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.25	10	88

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

STREAKING Tennessee opens the season against West Virginia in Charlotte, N.C., riding a seven-game win streak at neutral sites. The Vols also have won three consecutive bowl games, besting Big Ten foes Iowa (45–28, TaxSlayer), Northwestern (45–6, Outback) and Nebraska (38–24, Music City).

APPALACHIA BATTLE The Sept. 1 kickoff between Tennessee and West Virginia will mark the first time the programs have met. The game will be played at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, N.C. It's the first time the Vols have played a football game in the state of North Carolina since a 22–21 loss to North Carolina on Nov. 4, 1961.

BACK-TO-BACKS The Vols have one of the more rugged schedules in college football, facing SEC East Division rivals Florida and Georgia in back-to-back weeks in late September and then — after a bye week — SEC West powers Auburn and Alabama in consecutive weeks in October.

STAR-STUDDED STAFF Jeremy Pruitt has been a part of five national championship staffs — four at Alabama (2009, '11, '12 and '17) as well as one at Florida State (2013). The Vols' staff also includes 2000 Heisman Trophy winner Chris Weinke (Florida State), 1988 SEC Player of the Year and College Football Hall of Famer Tracy Rocker (Auburn) and 1998 NFL first-round draft pick Terry Fair (Tennessee).

FULMER IN CHARGE Phillip Fulmer, the Vols' legendary former head coach, assumed control as Tennessee athletic director on Dec. 1 after a well-documented coaching search went off the rails and John Currie was suspended. Fulmer had a 152–52 record as the Vols head coach between 1992-2008, winning two SEC titles and the 1998 national championship.

FINISHING UP There was a time it would have been hard to imagine Fulmer agreeing to anything that would help Alabama, but in this case the Tennessee AD approved of Pruitt finishing out the College Football Playoff as the Crimson Tide's defensive coordinator. "When I was at Tennessee," Pruitt says, "I worked on getting ready for that signing class. … It was easy going back to Alabama to start focusing on getting ready to play Clemson." Pruitt missed only two days of the Tide's bowl prep for the Tigers, and it showed as his defense held Clemson to 188 total yards and without a TD in an easy 24–6 College Football Playoff semifinal win en route to the national championship.

COACHING SEARCH Months after Tennessee's much-publicized coaching search mercifully came to an end, an open records request confirmed that Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy and NC State coach Dave Doeren were also interviewed for the position — but eventual UCLA coach Chip Kelly was not. Washington State coach Mike Leach was prepared to take the job if offered. Pruitt was hired on the 26th day of the search, beating out finalists Mel Tucker (Georgia DC) and Kevin Steele (Auburn DC).



MARQUEZ CALLAWAY

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.8	62
Defense	29.4	63
Margin	+0.4	60
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	39.1%	101
Defense	46.7%	115
Margin	-7.6%	115
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	120
Defense	5.9	87
Margin	-1.1	116
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	3.9	114
Defense	5.3	126
Margin	-1.4	127
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.6	75
Actual	-3	85
Margin	-2.4	91

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

69

The Vols allowed the highest rushing success rate in the country, so foes ran all day: 69 percent of the time on standard downs (first downs, second-and-7 or fewer, third-and-4 or fewer) and 42 percent on passing downs. Those rates were the fifth- and 11th-highest rates in the country, respectively.

-1.4

Tennessee was abysmal near either goal line. The Volunteers averaged just 3.9 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40) and allowed 5.3. This minus-1.4 point margin was 127th in FBS and worst in the SEC and meant that UT had to create seven chances to match what opponents were scoring in five.

-10.9

Tennessee's offensive success rate sank by 5.2 percentage points (from 44.3 percent to 39.1), while its defensive success rate allowed rose 5.7 (from 41.0 to 46.7). This combined regression of 10.9 percentage points was fifth worst in FBS, ahead of only Baylor, Tulsa, Louisville and Nebraska.

12

Since the AP poll began in the 1930s, the longest Tennessee has gone between top-15 finishes has been the 12 seasons between 1972 and 1985. The Vols' current streak could reach the same length soon — they last did the deed in 2007. For that matter, they have only twice finished ranked at all since then (22nd in 2015 and '16).

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 SIGNEES

Jeremy Pruitt had to work quickly on his first class after being hired on Dec. 7, less than two weeks before the start of the new early signing period. Pruitt and his staff signed 14 players in the early period, including junior college stars and potential impact players Dominick Wood-Anderson and Jordan Allen.

Tennessee athletic director and College Football Hall of Fame coach Phillip Fulmer helped during the early part of the process, making sure resources were in place and even going on the road some himself.

By National Signing Day, Feb. 7, Pruitt had addressed the team's most pressing need by adding depth to the line of scrimmage. The Vols' haul included highly rated prospects Greg Emerson, who could play either on the offensive or defensive line; Jerome Carvin, a 330-pound offensive tackle; Brant Lawless, a defensive tackle; and junior college transfers Emmit Gooden (defensive tackle) and Jahmir Johnson (offensive tackle).

Linebacker JJ Peterson, from Georgia powerhouse Colquitt County, was the highest rated of the Tennessee signees (No. 48 in the 247Sports Composite), as the Vols ended with the No. 20-ranked class in the nation.

"We're not finished yet," Pruitt promised on Signing Day, a pledge he followed up on by adding Stanford graduate transfer Keller Chryst in early March. Chryst is the favorite to line up under center for Tennessee, bringing an 11–2 career record as a starting quarterback with four years in a pro-style system similar to what the Vols now run.

Michigan State graduate transfer tailback Madre London and Michigan graduate transfer kicker Ryan Tice were two more add-ons after Signing Day, with Pruitt aiming for immediate fixes in addition to addressing needs.

"For us the recruiting rankings don't really matter," Pruitt says. "We don't need someone out there that runs the mail to tell us what a good football player is — these guys know what they are looking for in a football player."

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	7
Offensive Linemen	4
Wide Receivers	2
Tight Ends	2
Defensive Backs	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Linebackers	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Tennessee	9
Georgia	4
California	3
Florida	1
Louisiana	1
Nevada	1
Pennsylvania	1
South Carolina	1

Recruit Spotlight

JT Shrout

QB • Newhall, CA

Jeremy Pruitt has made a career out of studying and stopping offenses, and Tennessee's new head coach has come to a conclusion. "I know one thing," says Pruitt, who has coordinated four national championship defenses. "You can't win in this league without a quarterback."

The Vols' short-term solution could be Stanford graduate transfer Keller Chryst.

But 2018 signee JT Shrout was hand-picked to be Tennessee's quarterback of the future. Shrout originally committed to Cal, until Pruitt and offensive coordinator Tyson Helton came calling with visions of how the Vols' offense will evolve.

"At some point in time you have to make a great throw, make a big-time play to win the game," says Helton, who served as USC's pass game coordinator last season. "You have to be a thrower first. You have to be a field general. You have to get us out of trouble. You have to be a guy who is savvy that can move around in the pocket and make plays — do all those things and create plays, [and] that's what this young man does."

The 6'3", 190-pound Shrout has no issues with the competition that awaits him. In addition to Chryst, Tennessee's quarterback room is expected to include sophomores Jarrett Guarantano and Will McBride. Shrout told former Vols quarterback Erik Ainge in a local radio interview after signing that he was not intimidated.

"I believe I'm as good as any guy in the country," said Shrout, who passed for 3,064 yards last season with 27 touchdowns and 25 interceptions for Hart High School in Santa Clarita, Calif.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Jordan Allen	DE	6-5/230	Fairfield, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	13*
Tanner Antonutti	OT	6-5/260	Nashville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	769
Jeremy Banks	RB	6-2/215	Cordova, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★★	394
Paxton Brooks	K	6-5/170	West Columbia, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,864
Jerome Carvin	OT	6-4/330	Cordova, TN	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	375
Greg Emerson	DT	6-3/280	Jackson, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	136
Trevon Flowers	S	6-1/185	Tucker, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	933
Kurott Garland	DE	6-3/250	Conyers, GA	★★★	--	★★★	1,172
Kenneth George Jr.	CB	5-11/190	Lafayette, LA	--	--	--	--*
Emmit Gooden	DT	6-4/295	Brownsville, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	17*
Kingston Harris	DT	6-3/285	Orlando, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,212
Jahmir Johnson	OT	6-5/278	Philadelphia, PA	★★★	★★★	★★★	22*
Ollie Lane	OG	6-5/285	Corryton, TN	★★★★	★★★	★★★	891
Brant Lawless	DT	6-3/285	Nashville, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	256
John Mincey	DE	6-4/255	Homerville, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	798
JJ Peterson	OLB	6-3/231	Moultrie, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	48
JT Shrout	QB	6-3/190	Newhall, CA	★★★	★★★	★★★	644
Alontae Taylor	WR	6-0/182	Manchester, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	122
Cedric Tillman	WR	6-3/205	Las Vegas, NV	★★★	--	★★	1,684
Jacob Warren	TE	6-6/211	Knoxville, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	723
Dominick Wood-Anderson	TE	6-5/245	Spring Valley, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	9*

*junior college transfer

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

National Forecast: 70 /// SEC East Prediction: 7

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 8	Nevada
Sept. 15	at Notre Dame
Sept. 22	South Carolina
Sept. 29	Tennessee State
Oct. 6	at Georgia
Oct. 13	Florida
Oct. 20	at Kentucky
Oct. 27	at Arkansas
Nov. 10	at Missouri
Nov. 17	Ole Miss
Nov. 24	Tennessee

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 4-8, 1-7 SEC

After a promising close to the 2016 season, Vanderbilt took a step back in 2017. The Commodores were outgained by 124.5 yards per game in league action and won only one SEC game. Senior QB Kyle Shurmur returns to lead the way after throwing for 26 TDs last year, but standout running back Ralph Webb and three of the top receivers have departed. Transfers Ke'Shawn Vaughn (running back) and Alex Stump (receiver) will be counted on for immediate help. Derek Mason is handing the defensive play-calling duties to former Stanford assistant Jason Tarver after the defense gave up 6.9 yards per play in SEC games last fall. This unit returns only four starters, struggled to stop the run and generated just nine takeaways. Vanderbilt will have a tough time staying out of the SEC East cellar without significant improvement on defense.

Postseason: None

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Derek Mason

RECORD AT SCHOOL
18-31 (4 years)

CAREER RECORD
18-31 (4 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Andy Ludwig

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Jason Tarver

LOCATION
Nashville, TN

STADIUM
Vanderbilt Stadium (40,550)



JOEJUAN WILLIAMS

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

Vanderbilt's overall win total dropped by only one game from 2016 to 2017, but there are other — more telling — numbers that indicate the Commodores took a significant step back in Derek Mason's fourth season.

Consider the following: Vanderbilt was outgained by 124.5 yards per game and 1.47 yards per play against SEC opponents, after posting far more respectable deficiencies of 27.5 (per game) and 0.23 (per play) in 2016. In addition, six of the Commodores' seven league losses came by 14 points or more. In 2016, when the Dores went 3–5 in the league, each of their five losses came by nine points or fewer.

There were some bright spots — Vanderbilt went unbeaten in non-conference games (highlighted by a win over a ranked Kansas State team) and knocked off Tennessee for the second straight season — but there's no denying that the 2017 season was a disappointment on West End.

QUARTERBACKS Vanderbilt's passing attack was greatly improved in 2017 thanks in large part to the emergence of Kyle Shurmur in his second full season as the starter. The Commodores ranked fourth in the league with 243.6 passing yards per game — their highest total since Jay Cutler's senior season in 2005 — and mercifully ended a four-year streak in which they threw more interceptions than TD passes. Shurmur's completion percentage is still on the low side (57.9), but he averaged a respectable 7.4 yards per attempt (up from 6.4 as a sophomore) and set a single-season school record with 26 touchdown passes. He threw 10 interceptions, but seven came in a two-game stretch late in the season. Sophomore Deuce Wallace, who played in four games in 2017, and true freshman Allan Walters, one of the top recruits in the 2018 class, are the only other quarterbacks on scholarship. Wallace offers more mobility but lacks Shurmur's arm strength. Walters is a strong candidate to redshirt.

RUNNING BACKS Vanderbilt's struggles in the running game were one of the more surprising developments last fall. Despite the return of tailback Ralph Webb — the school's all-time leading rusher after three seasons — and three starters on the offensive line, Vanderbilt ranked last in the SEC with 107.2 yards per game (down from 164.2 in 2016). The most damning stat: The Commodores averaged 3.0 yards per carry or fewer in seven of 11 games against FBS opponents. Mason expects significantly better production this fall — due in part to the return of virtually the entire offensive line and the long-awaited arrival of Ke'Shawn Vaughn in the backfield. Vaughn, a Nashville native who went to high school two miles from the Vanderbilt campus, played his first two seasons at Illinois. He rushed for 723 yards as a true freshman in 2015 before falling out of favor with the new staff in Champaign. "Let me tell you, he will impress," Mason says. "He's really as good as advertised. That's not overselling — that's what he is. He's already put it on tape." Senior Khari Blasingame is poised for a bounce-back season. He rushed for a total of 147 yards during an injury-plagued 2017 season after show-

ing great promise the previous fall — his first at the position. Junior Josh Crawford, who was a healthy redshirt in 2017, and sophomore Jamauri Wakefield will also be in the mix for work in a crowded backfield.

RECEIVERS C.J. Duncan and Trent Sherfield last season became only the second pair of wide receivers in school history to each catch at least 50 passes in a season. Both have graduated, leaving junior Kalija Lipscomb as the clear-cut No. 1 target. Lipscomb caught 37 passes last season and led the team in both yards per catch (16.5) and TD receptions (eight). Offensive coordinator Andy Ludwig is searching for playmakers to team with Lipscomb. Donaven Tennyson is an intriguing option. The 5'10" junior is one of the fastest players on the team and can also be utilized in the running game on jet sweeps. He averaged 21.0 yards on his three carries in 2017. Alex Stump, a transfer from Ohio State, and a pair of 2017 recruits, sophomore Chris Pierce and redshirt freshman James Bostic, each stand at least 6'3" and will have ample opportunities to earn significant playing time. Two true freshmen, early enrollee CJ Bolar and local product Cam Johnson, likely will play right away. Tight end Jared Pinkney has been considered one of the team's most talented players since he arrived on campus, but he's caught only 44 passes in two seasons. He could emerge as a big target due to a lack of experience at the wide receiver position. True freshman Ben Bresnahan, an early enrollee, impressed in the spring.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The offensive line did a solid job in pass protection — 19 sacks allowed is a respectable number for a team that was third in the league in passing attempts per game (and one that featured an immobile quarterback such as Shurmur) — but struggled getting a push in the running game. The unit did improve, however, as the season progressed once the coaching staff settled on a starting five. The Commodores rushed for 100-plus yards four times against FBS opponents — all in the final six games of the season. All five starters and all but one reserve return, but there might be some moving parts in 2018. Bruno Reagan is expected to move from center back to right guard, where he started in 2016, with Egidio DellaRipa taking over at center. Cole Clemens, who played some snaps as an extra tackle in jumbo formations as a true freshman, is a strong candidate to take over at left guard.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Mason — and every other coach — will tell you that the SEC is a line of scrimmage league. Well, it's not difficult to see why Vanderbilt struggled defensively last season: The Dores simply did not get good enough play from their line. There's cautious optimism that things will be better in 2018. Despite the loss of Nifae Lealao, the unit's only 300-pounder, Van-



QB **KYLE SHURMUR**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY COMMODORES

KYLE SHURMUR, QB Became first Commodore to throw for 300-plus yards in three straight SEC games since Jay Cutler did it in four straight in 2005.

JOEJUAN WILLIAMS, CB Former four-star recruit has lived up to the hype and should vie for All-SEC honors.

KE'SHAWN VAUGHN, RB Nashville native rushed for 1,024 yards on a 4.7-yard average in two seasons at Illinois and is the favorite to replace Ralph Webb as the primary ball carrier.

CHARLES WRIGHT, OLB California native enjoyed a breakout junior season, ranking fourth in the SEC with 9.0 sacks — though only one came against an SEC opponent.

KALIJA LIPSCOMB, WR Expected to be the No. 1 target after catching 37 passes for 610 yards and eight TDs as a complementary piece in 2017.

KEY LOSSES

RALPH WEBB, RB Started 49 straight games and ended his career as the SEC's sixth all-time leading rusher (4,173 yards). Only Herschel Walker had more career carries.

TRENT SHERFIELD, WR Offensive coordinator Andy Ludwig called Sherfield "the hardest-working player I've ever coached."

OREN BURKS, LB Versatile defender started at both linebacker and safety during his career.

RYAN WHITE, S Recruited as a corner but moved to safety, where he emerged as a vocal leader of the defense.

NIFAE LEALAO, DT Top-rated recruit of Derek Mason's first class never developed into a star but was a dependable 300-pounder.

RISING STAR

Freshman **BEN BRESNAHAN** was one of the three early enrollees in the 2018 recruiting class, and the tight end from Georgia impressed the coaching staff during spring practice. With a lack of depth at tight end — a critical position in Vanderbilt's offense — Bresnahan likely will see significant playing time in the fall.

derbilt should have more size along the front. Cameron Tidd and Drew Birchmeier, both just under 300 pounds, played their way into the rotation late last season and are poised for bigger roles in their third season in the program. Redshirt freshman Rutger Reitmaier, a former four-star recruit who spent last fall at Oregon, will be a factor if he's eligible (transfer issues). The line's best player will be Dare Odeyingbo, a senior who led the team with 11.0 tackles for a loss last fall. The player with the most potential, however, could be Odeyingbo's younger brother, Dayo. Louis Vecchio, a grad transfer from Penn, will be a factor at end as well.

LINEBACKERS Charles Wright, a former two-star recruit who was a late addition to Mason's first class, emerged as the Dores' best pass rusher (team-high 9.0 sacks) in his first season as a starter. Senior Josh Smith, a former top recruit who has yet to deliver on his promise, and junior Caleb Peart are the top candidates at the other outside spot — although the Dores often play five defensive backs. A lack of proven players at inside linebacker is a concern. "That's the biggest question (on defense) to me," Mason says. Redshirt freshmen Colin Anderson and Dimitri Moore are two of the players who most excite the coaching staff. Senior Jordan Griffin, who plays with great instincts, is the leader of the group.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)				
WR	16	Kalija Lipscomb (Jr.)	85	Chris Pierce (So.)
WR	15	Alex Stump (Jr.)		Cam Johnson (Fr.)
SL	4	Donaven Tennyson (Jr.)	36	Trey Ellis (Sr.)
LT	**58**	**Justin Skule (Sr.)**	73	Johnathan Stewart (Fr.)
LG	74	Cole Clemens (So.)	**56**	**Saige Young (Jr.)**
C	**76**	**Egidio DellaRipa (Sr.)**	53	Sean McMoore (So.)
RG	**61**	**Bruno Reagan (Sr.)**	56	Saige Young (Jr.)
RT	**77**	**Devin Cochran (So.)**	78	Bryce Bailey (Fr.)
TE	**80**	**Jared Pinkney (Jr.)**	84	Sam Dobbs (Sr.)
QB	**14**	**Kyle Shurmur (Sr.)**	2	Deuce Wallace (So.)
RB	5	Ke'Shawn Vaughn (Jr.)	23	Khari Blasingame (Sr.)
DEFENSE (4)				
DE	**34**	**Dare Odeyingbo (Sr.)**	91	Drew Birchmeier (So.)
DT	90	Cameron Tidd (So.)	94	Rutger Reitmaier (Fr.)
DE	10	Dayo Odeyingbo (So.)		Louis Vecchio (Sr.)
OLB	**11**	**Charles Wright (Sr.)**	48	Andre Mintze (So.)
ILB	26	Andrew Rector (Sr.)	7	Dimitri Moore (Fr.)
ILB	40	Jordan Griffin (Sr.)		Alston Orji (Fr.)
OLB	25	Josh Smith (Sr.)	9	Caleb Peart (Jr.)
CB	**8**	**Joejuan Williams (Jr.)**	12	Tae Daley (So.)
CB	21	Donovan Sheffield (Sr.)		Alim Muhammad (Sr.)
S	**5**	**LaDarius Wiley (Sr.)**	35	Frank Coppet (So.)
S	6	Zaire Jones (So.)		Brendon Harris (Fr.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K		Javan Rice (Fr.)	KR	32 Jamauri Wakefield (So.)
P		Parker Thome (Sr.)	PR	16 Kalija Lipscomb (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS There are two known commodities in the secondary — corner Joejuan Williams (arguably the team's best player) and safety LaDarius Wiley — and then a bunch of questions. "We have guys who have played on (special) teams and have played in big ballgames," Mason says, "but they haven't been 'the guy' yet. We need to get them ready. They are an athletic group." Donovan Sheffield, a senior who has yet to live up to his recruiting hype, Holy Cross grad transfer Alim Muhammad and several first- and second-year players are options at the other starting cornerback spot. Sophomore Zaire Jones will take on a bigger role at safety after playing in a reserve role in 2017. Tae Daley, who combines solid cover skill with the ability to make plays close to the line of scrimmage, is a candidate for the all-important nickel back spot. Depth on the back end figures to be one of Vanderbilt's bigger issues this fall.

SPECIALISTS The special teams will have almost an entirely new look in 2018: new coach (Shawn Mennenga), new kicker (freshman Javan Rice or walk-on Ryley Guay) and new punter (grad transfer Parker Thome). Lipscomb is a solid punt returner, but the staff might not want to use the team's No. 1 wide receiver on special teams. Wakefield leads a handful of candidates to return kickoffs.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 VANDERBILT ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
14	Shurmur, Kyle	6-4/227	Sr.	Philadelphia, PA
2	Wallace, Deuce	6-2/210	So.	Sevierville, TN

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
23	Blasingame, Khari	6-1/235	Sr.	Huntsville, AL
22	Crawford, Josh	5-10/198	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
27	George, Jaire	6-1/230	Jr.	Hyattsville, MD
43	Higgs, Josh	6-0/225	So.	Nashville, TN
5	Vaughn, Ke'Shawn	5-10/215	Jr.	Nashville, TN
32	Wakefield, Jamauri	6-1/220	So.	Jacksonville, FL

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
83	Bolar, CJ	6-1/185	Fr.	Purvis, MS
81	Bostic, James	6-3/208	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
36	Ellis, Trey	5-9/170	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
16	Lipscomb, Kalija	6-1/200	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
85	Pierce, Chris	6-4/208	So.	Smithfield, VA
46	Starling, Keithian	6-0/180	Fr.	Nashville, TN
15	Stump, Alex	6-3/210	Jr.	Avon, OH
4	Tennyson, Donaven	5-10/170	Jr.	Richmond, VA
13	Winrow, Jackson	6-1/195	So.	Shawnee, OK

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
86	Bresnahan, Ben	6-4/230	Fr.	Cumming, GA
82	Cockrell, Turner	6-5/230	So.	Acworth, GA
84	Dobbs, Sam	6-4/230	Sr.	Douglasville, GA
89	Kopp, Braden	6-5/285	So.	Houston, TX
45	Markel, Cody	6-5/245	So.	Middleton, WI
80	Pinkney, Jared	6-4/255	Jr.	Norcross, GA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
78	Bailey, Bryce	6-5/305	Fr.	Newburgh, IN
74	Clemens, Cole	6-6/305	So.	South Jordan, UT
77	Cochran, Devin	6-7/305	So.	Norcross, GA
76	DellaRipa, Egidio	6-4/300	Sr.	Castaic, CA
55	Floyd, David	6-5/300	So.	Nashville, TN
59	Learned, John	6-3/285	Fr.	Gulf Breeze, FL
53	McMoore, Sean	6-4/305	So.	Kapolei, HI
63	Miller, Grant	6-4/260	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
57	Pfeifer, Ean	6-4/300	Jr.	Bentonville, AR
61	Reagan, Bruno	6-3/315	Sr.	Clarksville, TN
58	Skule, Justin	6-6/315	Sr.	Clifton, VA
71	Southers, Jared	6-5/310	Jr.	South Orange, NJ
73	Stewart, Johnathan	6-8/305	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA
56	Young, Saige	6-4/315	Jr.	Versailles, KY

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
91	Birchmeier, Drew	6-4/295	So.	Midlothian, VA
92	Buchanan, Jonah	6-4/270	Fr.	Honolulu, HI
96	DeBrossard, Darion	6-4/295	Jr.	Snellville, GA
99	Edwards, Stone	6-5/245	Fr.	Hillsborough, NC
54	Mayle, Kade	6-2/255	Jr.	McConnelsville, OH
34	Odeyingbo, Dare	6-2/272	Sr.	Irving, TX
10	Odeyingbo, Dayo	6-6/250	So.	Irving, TX
44	Pinkney, Jalen	6-4/230	So.	Norcross, GA
94	Reitmaier, Rutger	6-3/295	Fr.	Nashville, TN
66	Robinson, Cameron	6-0/300	Fr.	Mobile, AL
57	Sa'o, Josiah	6-2/295	So.	San Diego, CA
90	Tidd, Cameron	6-3/290	So.	Greenwood, IN
	Vecchio, Louis	6-5/250	Sr.	Orange, CA

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
17	Afemui, Feleti	6-3/235	Fr.	Kahului, HI
18	Anderson, Colin	6-2/215	Fr.	Florence, AL
52	DeVault-Smith, Brayden	6-3/208	Fr.	Nashville, TN
40	Griffin, Jordan	6-0/223	Sr.	Tampa, FL
42	Hebert, Kenny	6-4/228	So.	New Orleans, LA
48	Mintze, Andre	6-3/235	So.	Philadelphia, PA
7	Moore, Dimitri	6-3/215	Fr.	Cedar Hill, TX
88	Owusu, Michael	6-5/228	Fr.	Oxnard, CA
9	Peart, Caleb	6-1/235	Jr.	Chandler, AZ
26	Rector, Andrew	6-0/205	Sr.	Nashville, TN
25	Smith, Josh	6-4/240	Sr.	Murfreesboro, TN
51	Starr, Brett	6-0/210	So.	Nashville, TN
11	Wright, Charles	6-3/240	Sr.	Irvine, CA

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
38	Barksdale, Gil	5-10/180	Jr.	Solon, OH
35	Coppet, Frank	5-11/185	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
12	Daley, Tae	6-0/185	So.	Warner Robins, GA
28	George, Allan	6-1/185	Fr.	Andalusia, AL
15	Hamilton, Elijah	6-2/200	So.	Roswell, GA
24	Haynie, Randall	6-0/185	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
6	Jones, Zaire	6-0/200	So.	Meridian, MS
	Muhammad, Alim	5-10/175	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
29	Quillen, Austin	5-11/190	So.	Jenks, OK
21	Sheffield, Donovan	6-0/190	Sr.	Nashville, TN
5	Wiley, LaDarius	6-1/210	Sr.	Los Angeles, CA
8	Williams, Joejuan	6-3/208	Jr.	Nashville, TN

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
98	Guay, Ryley (K)	5-10/190	Jr.	Naperville, IL
45	Maxey, Alex (LS)	5-11/180	Fr.	Phoenix, AZ
39	Rice, Javan (K)	6-2/180	Fr.	Miami, FL
47	Schiager, Tommy (LS)	6-0/220	So.	Portland, OR
	Thome, Parker (P)	6-3/210	Sr.	Hortonville, WI

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 1-7 SEC

Sept. 2	at Middle Tenn.	W	28-6
Sept. 9	Alabama A&M	W	42-0
Sept. 16	Kansas State	W	14-7
Sept. 23	Alabama	L	0-59
Sept. 30	at Florida	L	24-38
Oct. 7	Georgia	L	14-45
Oct. 14	at Ole Miss	L	35-57
Oct. 28	at South Carolina	L	27-34
Nov. 4	Western Kentucky	W	31-17
Nov. 11	Kentucky	L	21-44
Nov. 18	Missouri	L	17-45
Nov. 25	at Tennessee	W	42-24



KALIJA LIPSCOMB

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Kyle Shurmur	**380**	**220**	**2,823**	**26**	**10**
Deuce Wallace	**22**	**11**	**94**	**1**	**0**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Ralph Webb	192	831	4.3	10
Khari Blasingame	**45**	**147**	**3.3**	**0**
Jamauri Wakefield	**28**	**115**	**4.1**	**0**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
C.J. Duncan	52	517	9.9	5
Trent Sherfield	50	729	14.6	5
Kalija Lipscomb	**37**	**610**	**16.5**	**8**
Jared Pinkney	**22**	**279**	**12.7**	**3**
Caleb Scott	18	178	9.9	2

KICKING: Tommy Openshaw, 3-7 FGs, 39-40 PATs, 48 points

TACKLES: **LaDarius Wiley, 88;** Oren Burks, 82

SACKS: **Charles Wright, 9.0**

INTERCEPTIONS: Ryan White, 2

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	24.6 ppg	11	95
Rushing	107.2 ypg	14	121
Passing	243.6 ypg	4	53
Total	350.8 ypg	10	102
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.3 ppg	11	88
Rushing	198.5 ypg	12	101
Passing	194.6 ypg	7	26
Total	393.1 ypg	8	65
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	12	97

SCOUTING THE COMMODORES

Opposing Coaches Size up Vanderbilt

"Kyle Shurmur is hot and cold. When he's good he's really good, and when he's not, he's not. You see him make some throws and say: 'Wow, that is really, really good.' But then other times he holds onto the ball too long, and he throws it to the other team. Consistency is the key for him as he advances in his career. For them to make the steps they want to make on offense, Kyle will have to take the next step and be a more consistent performer this year. ... Ralph Webb earned my respect. One of the top leading rushers in the history of the SEC. He's not exactly running behind the Dallas Cowboys offense line. The players I talked to in the league say he ran as hard as any player in the SEC. Played with a chip on his shoulder every week. Would not surprise if he has a really good pro career. He strikes me as if he was the heart and guts of the offense. ... I guess the kid from Illinois (transfer Ke'Shawn Vaughn) is going to be the top running back. He's a good player. (Khari) Blasingame is a big kid who has done some good things for them. ... I think they are struggling to find playmakers on both sides of the ball. I don't see those same athletes that they had a few years ago on defense, and I don't see Jordan Matthews or Jonathan Krause or some of those guys on the perimeter on offense. I don't think they are the same. ... Joejuan Williams is a really good player, a really good corner. Probably their best player on defense. ... I respect that coaching staff. They are putting their players in position to be successful, but I don't think they have the talent that they need across the board. They got mauled at times on defense last year."

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SHURMUR SHINES Kyle Shurmur enters his senior season with a realistic chance to pass Jay Cutler as the school's all-time leading passer. As a junior, Shurmur threw for 2,823 yards and set a single-season record with 26 touchdown passes. He needs 2,963 yards and 20 TD passes in 2018 to pass Cutler atop the leaderboard in both categories. Cutler passed his way into Vanderbilt lore by leading the Commodores to a 28–24 win over Tennessee in 2005 — the school's first victory over the Vols since 1982. Shurmur has enjoyed even greater success against Tennessee, becoming the first Vanderbilt quarterback since Bill Spears in the mid-1920s to beat the Vols in consecutive seasons. In three games against UT, Shurmur is averaging 302.7 passing yards (compared to a 178.9-yard average against other SEC schools) with nine touchdowns and two interceptions. Two years ago, he threw for 416 yards (the most ever by a Vanderbilt QB in a victory) and two touchdowns in a 45–34 win in Nashville, and last November he threw for 283 yards and four scores in a 42–24 victory at Neyland Stadium.

RED HOT IN RED ZONE Vanderbilt continued to excel in the red zone in 2017. The Commodores scored a touchdown on 81.1 percent (31 of 37) of their trips inside the 20-yard line, ranking second nationally in the category to Army (82.4 percent). In 2016, the Commodores ranked sixth nationally in red zone scoring overall (93.5 percent) and 25th in touchdown conversions (69.6 percent). This represented a dramatic improvement from 2015, Andy Ludwig's first season as Vanderbilt's offensive coordinator, when the Dores ranked 127th in Red Zone scoring (63.6 percent).

NO GOOD The Commodores' success scoring TDs in the red zone was a contributing factor as to why they tied for last in the country with only three made field goals (in seven attempts, second fewest in the nation).

DEFENSIVE WOES Three games into the 2017 season, Vanderbilt led the nation in both total defense (198.3 ypg) and scoring defense (4.3 ppg) en route to a 3–0 start. The Commodores' defensive fortunes, however, took a dramatic turn for the worse as SEC play commenced. They allowed 59 points in a shutout loss to Alabama in Week 4 and proceeded to set an SEC record by allowing 346 points (43.3 per game) in the eight-game schedule.

FUUUMBLE Vanderbilt recovered only two fumbles in 2017, the fewest in college football. It was quite a drop from the previous season, when the Commodores tied for fifth in the nation with 14 fumble recoveries.

COORDINATION Derek Mason's three-year run as the Commodores' defensive coordinator ended when he named Jason Tarver to the position in the offseason. Tarver worked with Mason at Stanford in 2011 and has spent the past six years in the NFL, three as the DC with the Raiders and three as a defensive assistant with the 49ers.



LADARIUS WILEY

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.3	103
Defense	30.5	94
Margin	-2.2	101
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.0%	51
Defense	41.1%	66
Margin	+1.9%	58
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.6	66
Defense	5.9	83
Margin	-0.3	81
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	5.1	12
Defense	4.8	99
Margin	+0.3	43
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.4	102
Actual	-5	97
Margin	-0.6	76

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

40.3

Vanderbilt never quite got over getting rocked by Alabama. After allowing just 13 points and 3.4 yards per play during a 3–0 start, the Commodores allowed 40.3 points per game and 6.5 yards per play thereafter. They gave up at least 44 points in five league games, more than in Derek Mason's first three years combined.

5.6

The defense's collapse distracted from the offense's improvement. Vanderbilt averaged 5.6 yards per play, just 66th in the country but the team's best average since 2012. The team passer rating of 135.7 ranked 51st in FBS after three straight years of ranking 117th or worse. Can QB Kyle Shurmur continue his progress without four of last year's top six receivers?

+0.35

Vanderbilt closed drives better than its opponents. The Commodores averaged 5.10 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40) and allowed just 4.75. The resulting margin of plus-0.35 points per opportunity ranked 43rd in the country and sixth in the SEC. Unfortunately, SEC foes created far more scoring chances, negating this advantage.

0.642

Every coach preaches that winning the turnover battle is vital, but that's doubly true when Vanderbilt is involved. The Commodores were 4–1 in 2017 when they had at least a plus-1 turnover margin and were 1–6 when they didn't. Over four years under Mason, they're 9–5 with a positive turnover margin (a 0.642 win percentage) and 9–26 without (0.257).

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 SIGNEES

With most of the legwork done on the heels of Vanderbilt's 2016 breakthrough bowl season, the 2018 class — 40th in the 247Sports Composite — ranks as the best of the Derek Mason era and the second best at the school in the Internet recruiting era.

Alston Orji, an inside linebacker from Texas, is the most decorated of the signees and will have a chance to play right away at a position of need. He committed to the Commodores last May over offers from Oklahoma, Texas and Texas A&M, among others. Orji's younger brother, Anfernee, is a four-star linebacker in the Class of 2019 who figures to take a long look at Vanderbilt as well.

The Commodores will need some immediate help at wide receiver after losing Trent Sherfield and C.J. Duncan to graduation. Cam Johnson, a local product who also starred on the basketball court (with Vanderbilt five-star hoops signee Darius Garland), and C.J. Bolar, an early enrollee from Mississippi, are strong candidates to see the field next fall. Gavin Schoenwald, Johnson's teammate at Brentwood (Tenn.) Academy, and Ben Bresnahan, an early enrollee, form a nice tight end duo.

The Commodores loaded up in the secondary with five defensive backs in the class. They are thin at cornerback, so don't be surprised if Tre Douglas, a 6'2" Georgia native, plays as a true freshman. Safety Brendon Harris, who originally committed to Tennessee, is one of four four-star prospects in the class.

Allan Walters is the only quarterback in the class and one of only three scholarship QBs on the roster. He chose Vanderbilt over Alabama and Michigan a month after witnessing Vanderbilt beat Ole Miss 38–17 in a breakout offensive performance late in the 2016 season. Dan Dawkins, Walters' teammate at The Peddie School in New Jersey, is the 11th-ranked center in the nation.

BY POSITION	
Defensive Backs	5
Wide Receivers	3
Offensive Linemen	3
Tight Ends	2
Defensive Linemen	2
Linebackers	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Florida	4
Georgia	3
Tennessee	3
New Jersey	2
Alabama	1
Kentucky	1
Mississippi	1
New York	1
North Carolina	1
Texas	1
Utah	1
Virginia	1

Recruit Spotlight

Allan Walters

QB • Chatham, NJ

Allan Walters went down with an injury during his junior season at The Peddie (N.J.) School — and that turned out to be a fortuitous turn of events for Vanderbilt.

"I saw how fast football can exit your life," says Walters, who became the first member of the Commodores' 2018 recruiting class when he committed in December 2016. "That made me realize the real importance of having a great education to fall back on. I just saw Vanderbilt as the perfect combination of academics ... and outstanding athletic competition in the SEC."

That realization — and a love for the South — explains why Walters turned down offers from Alabama and Michigan, among others, to sign with Vanderbilt. And after committing, Walters immediately turned his attention toward convincing other top players to join him in Nashville.

"I wanted to help cement the best class Vandy has had," he says, "and several coaches have gone on record and said we accomplished that together. We have a great group of not only players, but a great group of guys, so I'm super excited about it."

It might be a stretch to call Walters a dual threat, but he will bring more mobility to the position than current starter Kyle Shurmur if and when he ascends to the top spot at Vanderbilt.

"I'm not going to run a 4.5 and break an 80-yard run like [former Louisville QB] Lamar Jackson," he says, "but I feel like I can avoid pressure extremely well, extend the play and scramble for key yards if I have to. That is more dual-threat side to my game — not so much like the option or designed runs."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Amir Abdur-Rahman	WR	6-4/200	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,038
BJ Anderson	DB	6-2/172	Andalusia, AL	★★★	--	★★	1,681
C.J. Bolar	WR	6-1/186	Purvis, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	672
Ben Bresnahan	TE	6-4/230	Cumming, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	758
Dan Dawkins	C	6-3/300	Staten Island, NY	★★★	★★★	★★★★	551
Tre' Douglas	CB	6-2/190	McDonough, GA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	444
Brendon Harris	S	6-1/205	Chattanooga, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	371
Dashaun Jerkins	S	6-0/195	Woodbridge, VA	★★★	★★★	★★★	639
Camron Johnson	WR	6-1/182	Brentwood, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	264
Ja'Veon Marlow	RB	5-11/190	Winter Haven, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,118
Salua Masina	OLB	6-4/205	Salt Lake City, UT	★★★★	★★★	★★★	415
Elijah McAllister	DE	6-6/230	Rumson, NJ	★★★	★★★	★★★	738
Alston Orji	ILB	6-2/230	Rockwall, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	245
Javan Rice	K	6-2/180	Miami, FL	★★★	★★★	★★	2,075
Gavin Schoenwald	TE	6-4/225	Brentwood, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	604
Wyatt Smock	OG	6-4/290	Louisville, KY	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,190
Tyler Steen	OT	6-5/300	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,183
Lorenza Surgers	DE	6-6/230	Cary, NC	★★	--	★★	2,622
Allan Walters	QB	6-2/200	Chatham, NJ	★★★	★★★★	★★★	507
Max Worship	S	6-1/195	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	980

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

National Forecast: 1 /// SEC West Prediction: 1

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	**1**	vs. Louisville #
Sept.	**8**	Arkansas State
Sept.	**15**	at Ole Miss
Sept.	**22**	Texas A&M
Sept.	**29**	UL Lafayette
Oct.	**6**	at Arkansas
Oct.	**13**	Missouri
Oct.	**20**	at Tennessee
Nov.	**3**	at LSU
Nov.	**10**	Mississippi State
Nov.	**17**	The Citadel
Nov.	**24**	Auburn

#Orlando, FL

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 13-0, 8-0 SEC

Alabama, which won its fifth national title in the last nine years last January, is *Athlon Sports*' preseason No. 1 team. Big surprise. The Crimson Tide are loaded with talent on defense — as usual — but the development of the offense behind sophomore quarterback Tua Tagovailoa is a big reason why this team is the pick to win it all in 2018. Tagovailoa is the most talented QB to play under Saban in Tuscaloosa and has an emerging trio of sophomores ready to step up at receiver to replace Calvin Ridley. The Alabama backfield is once again stacked with talent, and the offensive line should be the best in the SEC. The defense does have to replace standout lineman Da'Ron Payne and rebuild in the secondary, but neither area is enough of a concern to derail Bama's title hopes.

Postseason: National Championship Game vs. Clemson

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Nick Saban

RECORD AT SCHOOL
132-20 (11 years)

CAREER RECORD
223-62-1 (22 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Josh Gattis, Mike Locksley

DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Pete Golding, Tosh Lupoi

LOCATION
Tuscaloosa, AL

STADIUM
Bryant-Denny Stadium (101,821)

There was a different feel to Alabama's most recent national title. For one thing, the Tide had to overcome a bewildering rash of injuries and a November loss to Auburn. There also were the emotional swings of the title game, topped off by the iconic second-and-26 walk-off winner.



DAMIEN HARRIS

The end result was the same, though — a fifth national title in the past nine seasons — and the expectations remain the same, thanks to many of the players who were involved in the crucial moments of that wild night in Atlanta. The number of offensive young guns who played key roles in the comeback against Georgia launched Bama into the offseason riding a wave of momentum not typically found amid postgame confetti showers.

Nevertheless, another serious restructuring of the defense confronts Nick Saban for his 12th season at Alabama. Even with losing a National Defensive Player of the Year along with practically the entire starting secondary, fans will expect another championship-level defense.

During spring practice, Saban understandably said he felt more comfortable with his offense than the defense, which still needed those alpha-dog leaders with guys such as Minkah Fitzpatrick, Rashaan Evans, Da'Ron Payne and Ronnie Harrison off to the NFL. How that unit comes together will determine if Alabama can repeat as national champions for the second time in Saban's tenure.

QUARTERBACKS It's the duo that's had everyone buzzing since halftime of the championship game. Jalen Hurts, the steady starter for two years, was replaced by flashy freshman Tua Tagovailoa, creating a quarterback competition unlike any other. Both have proven themselves on the big stage. It's a matter of finding the best fit — or, as Saban has hinted, making both fit. Both are athletic. Hurts has had the two best rushing seasons for an Alabama quarterback the past two seasons. Tagovailoa is also elusive, as he showed in the championship game. A few planned runs were also incorporated into his assignments last fall. The biggest difference comes in the passing styles. Beyond Tagovailoa's left-handed delivery, he just appears to get the ball away quicker, with extra zip. The Hawaiian made a few tight-window throws that Alabama needed to escape Atlanta with the title. Hurts struggled at times throwing downfield but didn't make many mistakes. His one interception in 254 attempts is a number Saban appreciates.

RUNNING BACKS Only Bo Scarbrough departed from a packed 2017 stable. Damien Harris ran for 1,000 years each of the past two seasons as a durable and powerful back who showed his speed on big runs last fall. His veteran presence is huge, especially if there's a first-year starter under center. Perhaps the most intriguing player is Najee Harris. The No. 1 running back in the 2017 signing class was the third or fourth option as a freshman. Though he didn't get the playing time he expected, the California product was on the field in the final few possessions of the national title game. Josh Jacobs battled injuries all season but emerged as an effective runner and a threat in the passing game.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

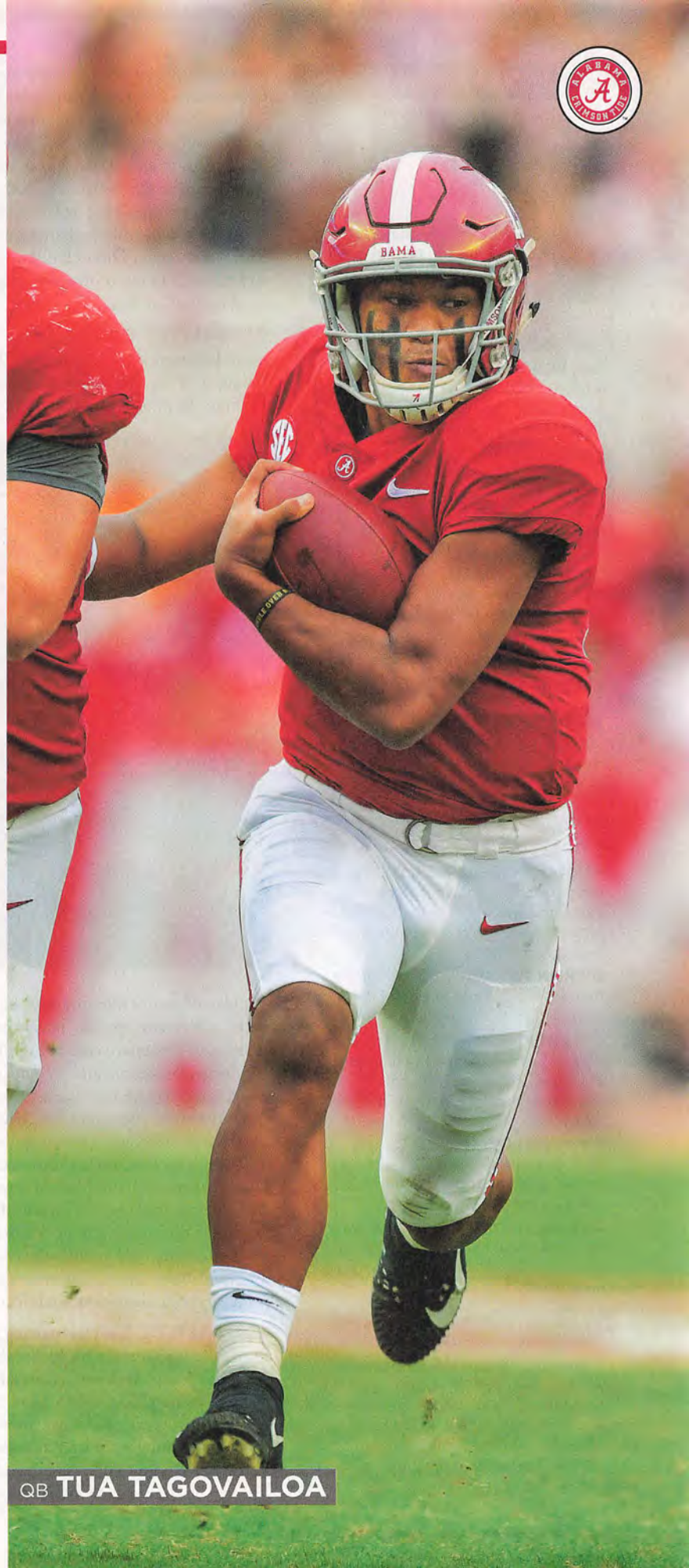
His 14 catches went for 168 yards and a pair of touchdowns. There's plenty of depth — keep an eye out for sophomore Brian Robinson — to feel comfortable in the running game even without a running back in the 2018 recruiting class.

RECEIVERS It's rare to see the departure of all three starters without an accompanying level of concern. Calvin Ridley, Robert Foster and Cam Sims are gone, but the next generation is already in place. Often, Alabama used Jerry Jeudy, DeVonta Smith and Henry Ruggs III on the field together as freshmen. All three had major catches in the title game, including touchdowns for Ruggs and Smith. Ruggs scored on each of his first five catches as a rookie, while Smith had game winners against Mississippi State and, of course, Georgia. Still, it's Jeudy who has the most potential and should be the top target this fall. Freshman Jaylen Waddle could compete for the slot receiver role.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN A nearly intact offensive line should also make for a favorable outlook running the ball. Only center Bradley Bozeman is gone from last season. There was some experimenting in the spring, which figures to carry into August, although there don't appear to be many weak links. Beyond the four returning starters are Alex Leatherwood and Jedrick Wills, a pair of sophomores who played up to their high recruiting rankings. At worst, they're capable fill-ins but could also challenge for starting jobs. Left tackle Jonah Williams is secure in his spot. Ross Pierschbacher played left guard the past two seasons but spent time at center this spring.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Payne could be the most difficult player to replace. His brute strength changed the line of scrimmage last season. A few replacement options were used in the spring — Johnny Dwight, Phidarian Mathis and Quinnen Williams. Also gone is end Da'Shawn Hand, though returnees Raekwon Davis and Isaiah Buggs are in position to handle that job. At 6'7", Davis is one of the biggest ever to play the position at Alabama. His interception in the national title game also showed off some of the athleticism that makes him a scary prospect for offensive linemen. LaBryan Ray is another young player who flashed potential, most notably with a sack at Texas A&M. Depth could be a concern, though the Tide added a late junior college signee in nose tackle Tevita Musika.

LINEBACKERS There are experienced options in place both inside and outside. There is, however, a difference in the available depth at the two spots. Outside, Terrell Lewis and Christian Miller are both veterans who missed almost all of last season with injuries. They're back and should instantly improve the edge pass rushing that suffered due to the health issues last fall. Anfernee Jennings should also be good to go by September



QB TUA TAGOVAILOA

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY CRIMSON TIDE

DAMIEN HARRIS, RB Rushed for exactly 1,000 yards as a junior, when he improved his breakaway speed for a few long touchdown runs.

RAEKWON DAVIS, DL The 6'7" defensive end plays with another level of fire and can be a nightmare for offensive linemen.

JONAH WILLIAMS, LT The most consistent offensive lineman is an intelligent leader to whom teammates respond.

TUA TAGOVAILOA, QB Native Hawaiian came out of the bullpen with one of the top relief performances in college football history.

MACK WILSON, ILB The team leader with four interceptions, Wilson returned one for the game-clinching touchdown against Clemson in the Sugar Bowl.

KEY LOSSES

MINKAH FITZPATRICK, DB Winner of the Bednarik and Thorpe awards, Fitzpatrick was the cornerstone of Alabama's defense and one of the best DBs in program history.

DA'RON PAYNE, DL Payne set the tone for the defense as one of the most powerful players in recent memory.

CALVIN RIDLEY, WR The first and second option seemingly in all passing situations, Ridley was Alabama's most dangerous playmaker for the past two seasons.

RASHAAN EVANS, ILB Playing through injuries, Evans' 74 tackles tied for the team lead. He provided a crucial voice on the defense.

RONNIE HARRISON, S The hard-hitting safety was always in the head of any opposing skill player who entered his domain.

RISING STAR

Everything is in place for sophomore wide receiver **JERRY JEUDY** to be the next breakout star. He has size, speed and hands to fill the void left by good friend Calvin Ridley. Jeudy should be the No. 1 weapon in the Tide's passing game.

after going down with a major knee injury in the Sugar Bowl. Young players such as Christopher Allen and VanDarius Cowan saw unexpected playing time because of the injuries. Jamey Mosley also provides solid depth, while top-five recruit Eyabi Anoma is set to arrive over the summer. There are fewer experienced inside linebackers in the mix. Mack Wilson and Dylan Moses are capable heirs to the position that's become a Tide calling card in the Saban era. Both had big moments in 2017, but the two also missed time with injuries. That makes the lack of reserves a concern. Veteran Keith Holcombe spent the spring with the baseball team and didn't participate in football practices. With Evans and Shaun Dion Hamilton gone, there will be a lot on the shoulders of Wilson and Moses. On top of that, the only addition to the group was three-star Jaylen Moody from South Carolina.

DEFENSIVE BACKS There is much less experience returning in the Crimson Tide defensive backfield. Deionte Thompson started both of the playoff games due to injury, but everyone else will be new in the third level of the defense. New cornerbacks Saivion Smith (a junior college transfer) and Patrick Surtain Jr. (a five-star freshman) could be options, along with a few returnees. Trevon Diggs started the opener last season and is competing again. Jared Mayden is also in the mix after serving as a top reserve for the past two seasons. Thompson figures to be one of the safeties, given his experience and voice, which are necessary for directing the defense from that spot. Xavier McKinney is a strong candidate for the other safety spot, along with Daniel Wright. Both were top backups as true freshmen last fall. Beyond the obvious talent vacuum, Alabama will need to find the play calling and leadership that departed for the NFL with Fitzpatrick. He was clearly the quarterback of the defense who helped everyone get where they needed to be. With fast-paced offenses more prevalent than ever, having a fast-thinking, fast-acting safety is a crucial component in making this defense work. The transition comes along with a new coordinator in Tosh Lupoi, whose experience is primarily with linebackers and linemen.



Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)					
WR	4	Jerry Jeudy (So.)	6	DeVonta Smith (So.)	
WR	11	Henry Ruggs III (So.)	14	Tyrell Shavers (Fr.)	
LT	**73**	**Jonah Williams (Jr.)**	70	Alex Leatherwood (So.)	
LG	67	Joshua Casher (Sr.)	59	Dallas Warmack (Jr.)	
C	**71**	**Ross Pierschbacher (Sr.)**	56	Brandon Kennedy (So.)	
RG	**66**	**Lester Cotton (Sr.)**	72	Richie Petitbon (Jr.)	
RT	**77**	**Matt Womack (Jr.)**	74	Jedrick Wills (So.)	
TE	82	Irv Smith (Jr.)	87	Miller Forristall (So.)	
HB	**84**	**Hale Hentges (Sr.)**	44	Kedrick James (So.)	
QB	13	Tua Tagovailoa (So.)	**2**	**Jalen Hurts (Jr.)**	
RB	**34**	**Damien Harris (Sr.)**	22	Najee Harris (So.)	
DEFENSE (3)					
DE	**49**	**Isaiah Buggs (Sr.)**	92	Quinnen Williams (So.)	
NT	95	Johnny Dwight (Sr.)	48	Phidarian Mathis (Fr.)	
DE	**99**	**Raekwon Davis (Jr.)**	89	LaBryan Ray (So.)	
OLB	24	Terrell Lewis (Jr.)	**33**	**Anfernee Jennings (Jr.)**	
ILB	30	Mack Wilson (Jr.)	36	Markail Benton (Fr.)	
ILB	32	Dylan Moses (So.)	40	Joshua McMillon (Jr.)	
OLB	47	Christian Miller (Sr.)	4	Christopher Allen (So.)	
CB	7	Trevon Diggs (Jr.)		Patrick Surtain (Fr.)	
CB	8	Saivion Smith (Jr.)	26	Kyriq McDonald (Fr.)	
SS	14	Deionte Thompson (Jr.)	21	Jared Mayden (Jr.)	
FS	3	Daniel Wright (So.)	15	Xavier McKinney (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	97	Joseph Bulovas (Fr.)	KR	8 Josh Jacobs (Jr.)	
P	10	Skyler DeLong (Fr.)	PR	7 Trevon Diggs (Jr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

SPECIALISTS Both the starting punter and placekicker graduated from the 2017 title team. The replacement for kicker Andy Pappanastos was already on campus in redshirt freshman Joseph Bulovas. Saban said in the spring that he was happy with progress from the Louisiana product — a good thing, since he's the only scholarship kicker on the roster. JK Scott exited as a two-time Ray Guy Award finalist who broke just about all the Alabama punting records in four years as a starter. His job is now in the hands of former Tennessee commit and star recruit Skyler DeLong, who enrolled in the spring to get a feel for the college game before the fall.

2018 ALABAMA ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
16	Edwards, Kyle	6-2/201	Jr.	Springfield, VA
18	Howard, Chris	6-1/219	Jr.	Gainesville, GA
2	Hurts, Jalen	6-2/218	Jr.	Houston, TX
10	Jones, Mac	6-2/199	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
13	Tagovailoa, Tua	6-1/218	So.	Ewa Beach, HI

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
34	Harris, Damien	5-11/213	Sr.	Richmond, KY
22	Harris, Najee	6-2/228	So.	Antioch, CA
8	Jacobs, Josh	5-10/212	Jr.	Tulsa, OK
35	Lockridge, De'Marquis	5-11/202	Sr.	Columbia, TN
38	Mapp, Zavier	5-9/212	Sr.	Thomasville, AL
33	Norris, Kendall	5-10/212	Sr.	Centreville, AL
24	Robinson Jr., Brian	6-1/220	So.	Tuscaloosa, AL

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
86	Adams, Connor	6-1/203	Jr.	Sugar Land, TX
29	Bolden, Slade	5-11/200	Fr.	West Monroe, LA
36	Hereford, Mac	6-2/211	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
4	Jeudy, Jerry	6-1/187	So.	Deerfield Beach, FL
81	Kief, Derek	6-4/204	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
19	Marks, Xavian	5-8/174	Sr.	Rosenberg, TX
31	Musso, Bryce	5-9/168	So.	New Orleans, LA
80	Parker, John	6-0/184	Jr.	Meridianville, AL
11	Ruggs III, Henry	6-0/179	So.	Montgomery, AL
14	Shavers, Tyrell	6-6/213	Fr.	Lewisville, TX
6	Smith, DeVonta	6-1/173	So.	Amite, LA
12	Townsend, Chadarius	6-0/196	Fr.	Tanner, AL

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
40	Amos, Giles	6-4/244	Jr.	Perry, GA
5	Clark, Ronnie	6-2/230	Sr.	Calera, AL
87	Forristall, Miller	6-5/242	So.	Cartersville, GA
84	Hentges, Hale	6-5/249	Sr.	Jefferson City, MO
44	James, Kedrick	6-5/255	So.	Waco, TX
82	Smith Jr., Irv	6-4/244	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
83	Stewart, Cam	6-8/265	Jr.	San Jose, CA
88	Tennison, Major	6-5/248	So.	Flint, TX

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
78	Baker, Elliot	6-7/305	Jr.	San Francisco, CA
50	Brannon, Hunter	6-4/290	Fr.	Cullman, AL
65	Brown, Deonte	6-4/350	So.	Decatur, AL
67	Casher, Joshua	6-1/291	Sr.	Mobile, AL
66	Cotton Sr., Lester	6-4/325	Sr.	Tuscaloosa, AL
56	Kennedy, Brandon	6-3/314	So.	Wetumpka, AL
76	Lashley, Scott	6-7/310	So.	West Point, MS
70	Leatherwood, Alex	6-6/314	So.	Pensacola, FL
79	Owens, Chris	6-3/313	So.	Arlington, TX
72	Petitbon, Richie	6-4/308	Jr.	Annapolis, MD
71	Pierschbacher, Ross	6-4/301	Sr.	Cedar Falls, IA
60	Randolph, Kendall	6-4/309	Fr.	Madison, AL
59	Warmack, Dallas	6-2/314	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
73	Williams, Jonah	6-5/301	Jr.	Folsom, CA
74	Wills Jr., Jedrick	6-5/312	So.	Lexington, KY
77	Womack, Matt	6-7/327	Jr.	Hernando, MS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
49	Buggs, Isaiah	6-5/287	Sr.	Ruston, LA
49	Cooper, William	6-2/236	So.	Huntsville, AL
99	Davis, Raekwon	6-7/308	Jr.	Meridian, MS
95	Dwight, Johnny	6-3/301	Sr.	Rochelle, GA
48	Mathis, Phidarian	6-4/308	Fr.	Monroe, LA
58	Powell, Daniel	5-11/246	Jr.	Aliceville, AL
89	Ray, LaBryan	6-5/280	So.	Madison, AL
91	Richardson, Galen	6-3/293	So.	Marietta, GA
44	Sewell, Joseph	6-2/270	So.	Murfreesboro, TN
92	Williams, Quinnen	6-4/289	So.	Birmingham, AL
95	Wilson, Taylor	6-0/258	Jr.	Huntington Beach, CA
90	Wynn Jr., Stephon	6-4/308	Fr.	Anderson, SC

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
4	Allen, Christopher	6-4/242	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
36	Benton, Markail	6-2/233	Fr.	Phenix City, AL
30	Burns, Ryan	6-0/214	Jr.	Dallas, GA
43	Cowan, VanDarius	6-4/236	So.	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
1	Davis, Ben	6-4/240	So.	Gordo, AL
54	Drake, Trae	5-10/236	So.	Roanoke, AL
42	Holcombe, Keith	6-4/236	Sr.	Tuscaloosa, AL
33	Jennings, Anfernee	6-3/262	Jr.	Dadeville, AL
24	Lewis, Terrell	6-5/256	Jr.	Washington, DC
56	Malone, Preston	5-11/226	So.	Northport, AL
40	McMillon, Joshua	6-3/243	Jr.	Memphis, TN
47	Miller, Christian	6-4/244	Sr.	Columbia, SC
32	Moses, Dylan	6-3/232	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
16	Mosley, Jamey	6-5/248	Sr.	Mobile, AL
23	Parks, Jarez	6-4/256	Fr.	Sebastian, FL
51	Riddick, Tucker	6-3/223	Jr.	Alcoa, TN
44	Weaver, Cole	5-9/222	So.	Florette, AL
30	Wilson, Mack	6-2/237	Jr.	Montgomery, AL

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
31	Anderson, Keaton	6-1/201	Jr.	Florence, AL
43	Bearden, Parker	6-1/218	Sr.	Bessemer, AL
5	Carter, Shyheim	6-0/195	Jr.	Kentwood, LA
7	Diggs, Trevon	6-2/195	Jr.	Gaithersburg, MD
41	Heath, Andrew	6-0/189	Jr.	Pell City, AL
13	Knott, Nigel	5-11/183	So.	Madison, MS
23	Lewis, Rogria	5-11/196	Sr.	Birmingham, AL
21	Mayden, Jared	6-0/196	Jr.	Sachse, TX
26	McDonald, Kyriq	5-11/195	Fr.	Madison, AL
15	McKinney, Xavier	6-1/197	So.	Roswell, GA
37	Mosley, Donavan	5-10/185	Sr.	San Antonio, TX
8	Smith, Saivion	6-1/198	Jr.	St. Petersburg, FL
14	Thompson, Deionte	6-2/194	Jr.	Orange, TX
3	Wright, Daniel	6-1/185	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
97	Bernier, Mike (P)	6-2/221	Sr.	Madison, AL
97	Bulovas, Joseph (K)	6-0/218	Fr.	Mandeville, LA
10	DeLong, Skyler (P)	6-4/180	Fr.	Fort Mill, SC
45	Fletcher, Thomas (LS)	6-2/223	So.	Georgetown, TX
98	Knight, Preston (P)	6-5/215	Jr.	Prattville, AL
52	Meyer, Scott (LS)	6-2/237	So.	Alpharetta, GA
62	Needham, Houston (LS)	5-10/218	So.	Chelsea, AL
53	Parris, Ryan (LS)	6-0/233	Sr.	Madison, AL
96	Satterfield, Brannon (P)	6-2/226	Sr.	Austin, TX

SCOUTING THE CRIMSON TIDE

Opposing Coaches Size up Alabama

"If only we were all so lucky to have the problem Nick (Saban) has: Two quarterbacks with the talent to win it all. But I absolutely think he's going to have to manage that dual-quarterback problem like he never has had to. Don't believe that idea that if you have two quarterbacks, you don't have one. That's ridiculous. We'd all kill for (Jalen) Hurts and Tua (Tagovailoa). Nick will do what's best for the team, not what's best for the ego of either of the two players, I guarantee that. ... I was just blown away watching that national title game last year, and all of those true freshmen running around making play after play for that offense. Three receivers, a left tackle, a stud tailback who barely saw the field, and of course, Tua. What a future there. They've always been strong offensively because they could dictate the pace of the game. But with those guys now, they'll be more dynamic than they've ever been under Nick. ... The one thing that is more impressive than any with that program is the way they just reload with not only players, but assistant coaches. They'll have two new coordinators this year, and a new quarterbacks coach, and does anyone really think they'll take a step back? Nick gets those assistant coaches in there and they learn what he wants — what he demands — from the first day. ... They're losing a lot on defense; that front will be completely retooled. They still might have the best edge guy in our league with Raekwon Davis. ... They've struggled in the secondary at times over the last three or four seasons and have given up some big plays. They gamble a lot — something you can do when you get after the QB like they do."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-1, 7-1 SEC

Sept. 2	vs. Florida State #	W	24-7
Sept. 9	Fresno State	W	41-10
Sept. 16	Colorado State	W	41-23
Sept. 23	at Vanderbilt	W	59-0
Sept. 30	Ole Miss	W	66-3
Oct. 7	at Texas A&M	W	27-19
Oct. 14	Arkansas	W	41-9
Oct. 21	Tennessee	W	45-7
Nov. 4	LSU	W	24-10
Nov. 11	at Mississippi State	W	31-24
Nov. 18	Mercer	W	56-0
Nov. 25	at Auburn	L	14-26
Jan. 1	vs. Clemson %	W	24-6
Jan. 8	vs. Georgia & (ot)	W	26-23

#Atlanta %Sugar Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal
&CFB Playoff Championship



MACK WILSON

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jalen Hurts	**254**	**154**	**2,081**	**17**	**1**
Tua Tagovailoa	**77**	**49**	**636**	**11**	**2**
RUSHING	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Damien Harris	**135**	**1,000**	**7.4**	**11**	
Jalen Hurts	**154**	**855**	**5.6**	**8**	
Bo Scarbrough	124	596	4.8	8	
Najee Harris	**61**	**370**	**6.1**	**3**	
RECEIVING	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Calvin Ridley	63	967	15.3	5	
Bo Scarbrough	17	109	6.4	0	
Jerry Jeudy	**14**	**264**	**18.9**	**2**	
Cam Sims	14	207	14.8	1	
Robert Foster	14	174	12.4	1	

KICKING: Andy Pappanastos, 18-25 FGs, 56-56 PATs, 110 points

TACKLES: Ronnie Harrison, 74; Rashaan Evans, 74

SACKS: **Raekwon Davis, 8.5**

INTERCEPTIONS: **Mack Wilson, 4**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	37.1 ppg	2	15
Rushing	250.6 ypg	3	13
Passing	193.4 ypg	9	91
Total	444.1 ypg	4	29
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	11.9 ppg	1	1
Rushing	94.7 ypg	1	1
Passing	165.7 ypg	2	6
Total	260.4 ypg	1	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+14	+1.00	1	5

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

DAMIEN'S NOT DONE If it's even a question, running backs typically lean toward the NFL over a senior season. There are only so many miles on those tires, after all. That's what made Damien Harris' decision to come back for Year 4 somewhat surprising. He hit 1,000 yards for a second straight season as a junior while improving his speed. Ultimately, it wasn't that hard of a decision, the Richmond, Ky., product says. He just wanted another year in the Alabama program before making the jump. Harris says it would be "politically correct" to say his place in Alabama statistical history didn't enter his mind, as he carries 2,194 career rushing yards into his final season. Shaun Alexander is still the all-time program leader with 3,880 yards (including bowl games).

TURNOVER LIFEBLOOD Alabama's defense lives on turnovers — the Tide have least one takeaway in 42 of the last 44 games. Bama took 80 possessions from the opposition in that span with 54 interceptions and 26 fumble recoveries. Of those, 17 were returned for touchdowns, but only two of those in 2017. Still, Alabama ranked fifth nationally in turnover margin last season, gaining 14 more than it lost.

BEATING NO. 1 Alabama had been the top-ranked team all season until losing at Auburn on the final weekend of the regular season. With some help, the Tide still made the CFB Playoff to face top-ranked Clemson. It was the 13th time the program faced a No. 1 team, and the 24–6 win improved Alabama's record to 9–4. Under Saban, Bama is 6–1 against top-ranked teams with the only loss coming against LSU in the 2011 regular season. The wins over Clemson and Georgia also moved Saban to 21–12 in games against top-five teams. The 21 wins are the most in college football history. Bobby Bowden checks in at No. 2 with 18.

FRESHMEN EXPERIENCE After signing arguably its best class in program history, Alabama sent a majority of those newcomers into action as true freshmen last year. A total of 17 saw the field as rookies; the only teams that played more freshmen were Illinois (22), LSU (20) and Texas A&M (18). Newcomers played a huge role in the national title game win beyond quarterback Tua Tagovailoa's passing. Two of the three passing touchdowns went to freshmen, Henry Ruggs III and DeVonta Smith. Alex Leatherwood came off the bench to replace injured left tackle Jonah Williams, while Najee Harris was on the field for the most critical fourth-quarter possessions as the team's leading rusher.

TOP-RANKED DEFENSE After dipping as low as No. 12 in 2014, Alabama had the No. 1 total defense nationally the last two seasons. The numbers were nearly identical in 2016 and 2017 in terms of yards allowed. After giving up 261.8 yards per game in the runner-up season, the Tide allowed 260.4 last fall. Yards per play: 3.99 both years. Bama was No. 1 stopping the run in 2017 and No. 6 against the pass.



NAJEE HARRIS

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	33.9	3
Defense	25.1	2
Margin	**+8.8**	**2**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.8%	17
Defense	33.7%	7
Margin	**+12.1%**	**5**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.6	13
Defense	4.0	1
Margin	**+2.6**	**1**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	33
Defense	3.4	4
Margin	**+1.4**	**4**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	+6.6	16
Actual	+14	5
Margin	**+7.4**	**12**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

45.8

Alabama's ground game was as steady as ever. The Tide gained at least 5.0 yards on 45.8 percent of their carries (fourth in FBS) and got stuffed at or behind the line just 13.3 percent of the time (also fourth). Jalen Hurts' run consistency was incredible: 52 percent of his non-sack carries gained five-plus yards.

50

Only six power conference players were targeted by at least 30 percent of their team's passes in 2017, and only one — Bama's Calvin Ridley — had a success rate over 50 percent on those targets. Ridley was a security blanket for an otherwise young receiving corps, and now all those sophomores who stepped up in the title game will have to make those steps permanent.

+7.4

Being lucky and good is a great combination. Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, Alabama's turnover margin should have been around plus-6.6. Instead, it was plus-14. This difference of 7.4 turnovers was the largest in the SEC.

7

Alabama has finished either first or second in the final S&P+ rankings for seven consecutive years and eight of the last nine, a run of dominance almost unmatched in modern college football. Even in Bobby Bowden's incredible Florida State run, he was ranking in the top four every year, not the top two.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 SIGNEES

For the first time in seven years, Alabama didn't have the top recruiting class in the country. Georgia's Kirby Smart is starting to hit his stride in that department three years after leaving Tuscaloosa. There's still some high-end talent in this Crimson Tide class, though.

Eyabi Anoma was the nation's No. 4 prospect as a still-raw outside backer/defensive end. His speed and 6'5" size could make him one of the next great pass rushers down the line. The exodus in the secondary put defensive backs at a premium, and Alabama landed the No. 1 cornerback in Patrick Surtain Jr., a key February pickup with both starting CBs from last year graduating. Jalyn Armour-Davis and Josh Jobe are also four-star cornerbacks worth watching in the future.

Nick Saban says he wanted to get at least one more linebacker after losing considerable talent in the middle. Three-star Jaylen Moody was a late addition in February as the only middle linebacker signee.

On offense, Jaylen Waddle was a big get in February. Texas A&M made a late push before the four-star signed with the Tide. The 5'10", 175-pound receiver is ideal for the slot, a position for which Alabama hasn't had a natural fit the last few seasons. For the first time since 2004, the class didn't include a quarterback. The Tide had a graduate transfer QB committed until East Carolina's Gardner Minshew opted for Washington State instead. It leaves Alabama with just three quarterbacks on scholarship.

What makes this class unique is the lack of early enrollees. A year ago, 16 were in place for spring practice. That number was just five this season. Players such as Tua Tagovailoa, Jerry Jeudy and Dylan Moses benefited from the 15-practice head start that many of the 2018 stars won't get. The 2018 early enrollees included junior college transfer Saivion Smith, a former LSU cornerback who could make an immediate impact given the thinned depth chart. Defensive lineman Stephon Wynn, running back Slade Bolden, outside linebacker Jarez Parks and punter Skyler DeLong were also on campus for spring practice.

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	5
Cornerbacks	5
Linebackers	3
Running Backs	2
Wide Receivers	2
Offensive Linemen	2
Tight Ends	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Florida	6
South Carolina	3
Alabama	2
California	2
Louisiana	2
Indiana	1
Maryland	1
Pennsylvania	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1
Utah	1

Recruit Spotlight

Patrick Surtain Jr.

CB • Plantation, FL

This isn't the first opportunity for Nick Saban to coach a player named Patrick Surtain. Only 13 years after the first occasion, the younger version is heading to Tuscaloosa. The top-ranked cornerback prospect in the nation happens to be the son and share the name of the former Pro Bowl defensive back.

Patrick Surtain Sr. was with the Miami Dolphins when Saban arrived in 2005. He was one of the best in the game, but the team wanted to make a change for financial reasons. Saban at the time said he wanted to keep Surtain Sr., but a trade to Kansas City came a few months after the coaching change.

More than a decade later, Saban went back to South Florida to pluck Surtain Jr. for the Crimson Tide. He beat out perceived favorite LSU to get the commitment on National Signing Day in February.

A star at American Heritage in Plantation, Surtain Jr. has the kind of 6'2" frame you can't teach. Teams stayed away from his side of the field as a senior, which led to just one interception last fall.

"Patrick's a little longer type guy, the kind of guy we like here," Saban says. "He's a very instinctive player, has a good long speed. [He] uses his length well, has good ball skills, good ball judgment, can play man-to-man, not afraid to get up and press people — that's a good style for him and that's our style here. We're excited about having him in the program, and we're really looking forward to working with him."

The graduation of starting cornerbacks Levi Wallace and Anthony Averett creates an opportunity to compete for a spot on the first team, though Surtain Jr. wasn't an early enrollee and didn't get a head start in the spring.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Eyabi Anoma	OLB	6-5/230	Baltimore, MD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	4
Jalyn Armour-Davis	CB	6-1/180	Mobile, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	107
Christian Barmore	DT	6-5/290	Philadelphia, PA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	176
Slade Bolden	RB	5-11/198	West Monroe, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	496
Tommy Brown	OG	6-7/313	Santa Ana, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	132
Jordan Davis	DE	6-5/240	Memphis, TN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	108
Skyler DeLong	P	6-4/180	Fort Mill, SC	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,575
Emil Ekiyor	C	6-3/339	Indianapolis, IN	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	113
Jerome Ford	RB	5-11/195	Seffner, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	370
Josh Jobe	CB	6-1/180	Miami, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	109
Cameron Latu	DE	6-5/236	Salt Lake City, UT	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	131
Jaylen Moody	ILB	6-2/225	Conway, SC	★★★	★★★	★★	1,202
Tevita Musika	DT	6-2/360	Milpitas, CA	--	--	--	--
Michael Parker	TE	6-6/230	Huntsville, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	693
Jarez Parks	OLB	6-4/260	Sebastian, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	91
Saivion Smith	CB	6-1/185	St. Petersburg, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	2*
Eddie Smith	CB	6-0/180	Slidell, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	436
Patrick Surtain Jr.	CB	6-2/199	Plantation, FL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	6
Jaylen Waddle	WR	5-10/175	Bellaire, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	39
Xavier Williams	WR	6-1/190	Hollywood, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	143
Stephon Wynn	DE	6-4/308	Anderson, SC	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	74

*junior college transfer

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

National Forecast: 59 /// SEC West Prediction: 7

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Eastern Illinois
Sept. 8	at Colorado State
Sept. 15	North Texas
Sept. 22	at Auburn
Sept. 29	vs. Texas A&M #
Oct. 6	Alabama
Oct. 13	vs. Ole Miss %
Oct. 20	Tulsa
Oct. 27	Vanderbilt
Nov. 10	LSU
Nov. 17	at Mississippi State
Nov. 24	at Missouri

#Arlington, TX %Little Rock, AR

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 5-7, 1-7 SEC

The Razorbacks are a team in transition. Chad Morris' innovative offense and recruiting ties to the state of Texas should help the program move forward in the brutal SEC West. However, the switch from a pro-style offense to a spread will require an adjustment period. Arkansas left spring without a starter at quarterback, and a line that struggled in 2017 still has major question marks. The strength of the offense is at running back with Devwah Whaley and Chase Hayden. The defense has ranked last in the SEC in yards per play allowed for three straight years but is likely to take a step forward with seven returning starters under new coordinator John Chavis. The schedule is manageable — Vanderbilt and Missouri in crossover games — but the Hogs will still have a tough time reaching bowl eligibility.

Postseason: None

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Chad Morris

RECORD AT SCHOOL
First Season

CAREER RECORD
14-22 (3 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Joe Craddock

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
John Chavis

LOCATION
Fayetteville, AR

STADIUM
Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium (80,800)

It's safe to call the task facing first-year Arkansas coach Chad Morris and his staff a rebuild.

The Razorbacks floundered to a 4–8 record, including a 1–7 finish in the SEC, last year and lost five games by 20 or more points, a school record. The defense was the worst statistically in Arkansas history, allowing 36.2 points and 438.3 yards per game. Injuries simply devastated the offense, including running backs Rawleigh Williams III, who was forced to retire from football with a neck injury, and Chase Hayden, receiver Jared Cornelius, quarterback Austin Allen and eventually ace center Frank Ragnow.



MCTELVIN AGIM

Morris and offensive coordinator Joe Craddock have installed an up-tempo power spread attack, a vast departure from the pro-style, huddle-it-up, ball-control approach favored by previous coach Bret Bielema. How well this unit can stay on the field, mix in some big plays and help out a thin defense will go a long way in determining whether the Razorbacks can win enough games to become bowl eligible in 2018.

Defensive coordinator John Chavis, who has spent the last 23 years coordinating defenses in the SEC — at Tennessee, LSU and Texas A&M — needs more speed and elite pass rushers as he returns the Razorbacks to a base 4-3 alignment following an ill-fated year in a 3-4. Arkansas will be aggressive with its pressure packages and man coverage, so its sack numbers and ability to disrupt the quarterback should go up, but it will also be prone to allowing the big play.

QUARTERBACKS Sophomore Cole Kelley lost about 15 pounds to become more nimble in a system that requires mobility from the quarterback, but the 6'7", 263-pounder from Lafayette, La., is not a shoo-in to be the Week 1 starter. Junior Ty Storey has worked out the hitch in his delivery and was praised by the coaches during the spring for his work learning the new offense. He's got the mental part of the offense down solid, so if he can execute the schemes with a degree of success, he could battle for first-team reps. Kelley, who was 2–2 in relief of Allen last year, has been a more dynamic playmaker than Storey, but he must improve his ball security. Morris and Craddock do not plan to name a starter until fall camp. Daulton Hyatt is a strong runner, so the offense should be a fit for the redshirt freshman at some point in the future.

RUNNING BACKS Morris says he likes to keep at least five tailbacks on the roster, and the Razorbacks will hit that capacity this fall. Junior Devwah Whaley is more of a between-the-tackles pounder, but he has shown some breakaway ability. He rushed for 559 yards on a team-high 127 carries in 2017. Hayden was making a splash last season as a quick, shifty option before going out with a foot injury midway through the year. He and T.J. Hammonds have more home-run capabilities, while redshirt freshman Maleek Williams, who lost 15 pounds to get down to 215, is a natural tackle breaker who should contribute. Transfer Rakeem Boyd, a former Texas A&M signee, will join the crew this summer. Maleek Barkley, redshirted as a receiver in 2017, has transitioned to running

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

back. Fullbacks Kendrick Jackson and Hayden Johnson were solid lead blockers in the previous I-formation schemes, and their roles will likely be modified into H-back types with Austin Cantrell.

RECEIVERS There is no shortage of candidates for new position coach Justin Stepp, but the question is: Can any of them emerge as big-time playmakers? Cornelius is back for his senior year following Achilles tendon surgery, joining leading receiver Jonathan Nance, whose emergence last year was a bit of a surprise over more celebrated junior college teammate Brandon Martin. Deon Stewart, Jordan Jones, Martin and La'Michael Pettway have shown flashes, but they were mostly up and down throughout spring drills. Nance remains a front-line talent who should be a consistent target. Youngsters with the potential to pitch in include De'Vion Warren and Koilan Jackson, who tore a knee ligament in camp last year. Mike Woods, an early enrollee, looked good in the spring and is likely to help from a big-play standpoint.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN One of the SEC's least consistent units lost its top dog in Ragnow, but the veteran returners insist Arkansas can make a surprise turnaround up front this fall. The most noticeable difference should be in a more lean group that will have better stamina to play faster. Left guard Hjalte Froholdt, who made big strides from his sophomore to his junior year, has taken the leadership reins from Ragnow and is playing with increased confidence after a strong finish in 2017. Tackles Colton Jackson and Brian Wallace have combined for 30 starts. Johnny Gibson battled Jalen Merrick at right guard in the spring. Ty Clary and Dylan Hays, who both have limited experience, took reps with the starters in the spring as the Hogs look to replace not only Ragnow but also would-be senior Zach Rogers, who retired to start a career in law enforcement. Hays is a former defensive lineman, while Clary started the first four games at right guard last year. The top backups look to be redshirt freshmen Kirby Adcock, Shane Clenin and Dalton Wagner, who got high marks from Bielema last season.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Chavis says he likes to build his attacking defenses around quality rush ends, and he has a track record to prove that. The Razorbacks, who failed to generate consistent pressure even when blitzing last year, have candidates to fill that role, led by Randy Ramsey (an outside linebacker in last year's 3-4). McTelvin Agim has played inside, where he can be a matchup problem with his quickness, and outside, where he can utilize strong pass-rushing skills. He's done both in the new system and was working at nose guard during the spring. Returning defensive line coach John Scott Jr. would like to unleash another standout or two



LB **DE'JON HARRIS**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY RAZORBACKS

DE'JON HARRIS, LB An underrated star on a poor defense, Harris was third in the SEC with 115 tackles.

MCTELVIN AGIM, DL The versatile Agim has played everywhere on the defensive line during his time at Fayetteville. New DC John Chavis hopes to coax more production out of the junior.

DRE GREENLAW, LB Back at his more natural weak-side linebacker spot after having a solid year on the inside. Second on the team with 103 tackles.

SANTOS RAMIREZ, S Ballhawk is looking for more takeaways after intercepting only one pass in 2017.

JONATHAN NANCE, WR Team leader in 2017 in receptions (37), yards (539) and TD catches (five) in his first year after transferring from junior college.

KEY LOSSES

FRANK RAGNOW, C The heart and soul of the offensive line the last two years was a gamer and a dominator.

AUSTIN ALLEN, QB Had a better junior year than senior year due to injured shoulder and protection issues up front. Touchdowns dropped from 25 in 2016 to 10 last fall.

HENRE' TOLIVER, CB Had a solid season in coverage and was productive as a punt returner.

DAVID WILLIAMS, RB Shifty, fall-forward kind of runner posted quality numbers in a crowded backfield in his only season at Arkansas.

BIJHON JACKSON, NG The 330-pounder was solid at the point, tying up blockers to allow the inside backers to make plays.

RISING STAR

GABE RICHARDSON had a fumble-forcing tackle that the Razorbacks returned for a touchdown in the 2017 season opener but was hardly heard from again. The switch from outside linebacker to end in the Hogs' return to a 4-3 front should be a tonic for the 6'3", 247-pounder, who says "it feels like home" going back to end.

at end from the group of Gabe Richardson, Michael Taylor and Jamario Bell along with signees Dorian Gerald and Nick Fulwider and others. Austin Capps is back at nose guard along with Jonathan Marshall, though Capps missed most of spring recovering from a hernia issue. T.J. Smith, an end last season like Agim, has moved inside to tackle, where there should be a little depth with returners such as Briston Guidry, Armon Watts and Jake Hall. Can big signee Billy Ferrell (6'3", 331) have an impact this fall? That would be a plus.

LINEBACKERS The return to a 4-3 scheme should help middle linebacker De'Jon Harris, who had 115 tackles last season but had to contend with more interference from offensive linemen. Dre Greenlaw is back at the weak-side linebacker spot at which he had a solid freshmen debut in 2015 and should make a formidable duo with Harris. The other outside linebacker spot could be manned by many candidates when the Hogs are in their base package. Players such as Dee Walker, Grant Morgan, Alexy Jean-Baptiste, Kyrei Fisher, Hayden Henry, Giovanni LaFrance and possibly newcomers Bumper Pool and Andrew Parker will battle for playing time.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)					
WR	7	Jonathan Nance (Sr.)	8	Michael Woods (Fr.)	
WR	16	La'Michael Pettway (Jr.)	10	Jordan Jones (So.)	
WR	9	De'Vion Warren (So.)	13	Deon Stewart (Jr.)	
LT	74	**Colton Jackson (Jr.)**	57	Shane Clenin (Fr.)	
LG	51	**Hjalte Froholdt (Sr.)**	68	Kirby Adcock (Fr.)	
C	69	Dylan Hays (So.)	66	Ty Clary (So.)	
RG	62	**Johnny Gibson (Sr.)**	79	Jalen Merrick (Jr.)	
RT	60	**Brian Wallace (Sr.)**	78	Dalton Wagner (Fr.)	
TE	18	Jeremy Patton (Sr.)	44	**Austin Cantrell (Jr.)**	
QB	15	Cole Kelley (So.)	4	Ty Storey (Jr.)	
RB	21	**Devwah Whaley (Jr.)**	2	Chase Hayden (So.)	
DEFENSE (7)					
DE	10	**Randy Ramsey (Sr.)**	91	Michael Taylor (Sr.)	
NG	3	**McTelvin Agim (Jr.)**	41	Austin Capps (Jr.)	
DT	52	**T.J. Smith (Jr.)**	7	Briston Guidry (So.)	
DE	6	Gabe Richardson (Jr.)	86	Jamario Bell (Jr.)	
OLB	33	Dee Walker (So.)	31	Grant Morgan (So.)	
MLB	8	**De'Jon Harris (Jr.)**	16	Bumper Pool (Fr.)	
WLB	23	**Dre Greenlaw (Sr.)**	4	Alexy Jean-Baptiste (So.)	
CB	11	Ryan Pulley (Sr.)	14	Britto Tutt (Jr.)	
CB	1	Chevin Calloway (So.)	13	Nate Dalton (Sr.)	
FS	9	**Santos Ramirez (Sr.)**	21	Montaric Brown (Fr.)	
SS	2	**Kamren Curl (So.)**	25	Micahh Smith (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Connor Limpert (Jr.)	KR	9 De'Vion Warren (So.)	
P	18	Blake Johnson (Jr.)	PR	1 Jared Cornelius (Sr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS The secondary returns plenty of experience, but things might look quite different in 2018. Two starters from last fall are at new spots — Santos Ramirez has moved from strong to free safety, and cornerback Kamren Curl is now at strong safety. Ryan Pulley, who missed all but one game with a torn pectoral muscle, is back. Chevin Calloway is battling for the other starting corner spot. Kevin Richardson, a veteran contributor as a nickel back, went through spring drills in non-contact fashion as he was vying for a sixth year of eligibility from the NCAA. His return would be a boost to the nickel spot, where Derrick Munson is also in the mix. Expect more snaps from Britto Tutt, Nate Dalton and possibly signee Ladarrius Bishop at cornerback. The safety spots aside from ballhawks Ramirez and Curl could feature Montaric Brown and signees Joseph Foucha and Myles Mason.

SPECIALISTS Warren came on strong the second half of 2017 as a kick returner and should be more productive as a sophomore. Cornelius is likely to return to his old job as punt returner though young candidates abound. Connor Limpert had a strong season as the lead placekicker after winning the job in Week 3. The left footer went 8-of-9 on field goals, including a game-winning 34-yard boot in the final seconds at Ole Miss. The Razorbacks need to be better at punter after first-year starter Blake Johnson averaged 38.6 yards per kick.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 ARKANSAS ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
17 Aune, Austin	6-2/199	Fr.	Argyle, TX
11 Hyatt, Daulton	6-4/192	Fr.	Arab, AL
15 Kelley, Cole	6-7/263	So.	Lafayette, LA
18 Lindsey, Jack	6-2/198	So.	Fayetteville, AR
14 Proctor, Carson	6-3/208	So.	Vero Beach, FL
4 Storey, Ty	6-2/220	Jr.	Charleston, AR

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
14 Barkley, Maleek	5-10/171	Fr.	Austin, TX
6 Hammonds, T.J.	5-10/199	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
2 Hayden, Chase	5-10/192	So.	Memphis, TN
26 Hobbs, Justice	5-10/207	So.	Farmington, AR
34 Jackson, Kendrick	6-0/270	Sr.	Haynesville, LA
32 Johnson, Hayden	6-2/261	Jr.	Columbia, MO
21 Whaley, Devwah	5-11/215	Jr.	Beaumont, TX
23 Williams, Maleek	5-11/215	Fr.	Punta Gorda, FL

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
81 Barnes, Jarrod	5-11/171	So.	Cabot, AR
17 Boateng, Kofi	6-1/185	So.	Arlington, TX
1 Cornelius, Jared	5-11/207	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
82 Cross, Gary	6-1/177	Sr.	Fordyce, AR
86 Enlow, Tobias	6-2/195	So.	N. Little Rock, AR
83 Gulledge, De'Shawn	5-9/166	Fr.	Kensett, AR
3 Jackson, Koilan	6-2/211	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
10 Jones, Jordan	6-1/173	So.	Smackover, AR
5 Martin, Brandon	6-4/219	Jr.	Monroe, LA
24 Montrois, Kasey	5-10/181	Fr.	West Palm Beach, FL
19 Morris, Tyson	6-1/199	Fr.	Helena-West Helena, AR
7 Nance, Jonathan	6-0/166	Sr.	Gulfport, MS
16 Pettway, La'Michael	6-2/224	Jr.	Nashville, AR
13 Stewart, Deon	5-11/158	Jr.	Hardy, AR
9 Warren, De'Vion	5-10/179	So.	Monroe, LA
8 Woods, Michael	6-1/186	Fr.	Magnolia, TX

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
44 Cantrell, Austin	6-3/253	Jr.	Roland, OK
80 Gragg, Will	6-4/231	Jr.	Dumas, AR
89 Gunter, Grayson	6-6/234	So.	Madison, MS
87 Kern, Blake	6-4/236	So.	Lamar, AR
85 O'Grady, Cheyenne	6-4/248	Jr.	Fayetteville, AR
39 Pace, Jackson	6-2/233	Fr.	Texarkana, TX
18 Patton, Jeremy	6-5/258	Sr.	Indianapolis, IN
40 Purifoy, Trey	6-7/237	Jr.	Little Rock, AR

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
68 Adcock, Kirby	6-5/279	Fr.	Nashville, AR
66 Clary, Ty	6-4/285	So.	Fayetteville, AR
57 Clenin, Shane	6-6/297	Fr.	Festus, MO
51 Froholdt, Hjalte	6-5/315	Sr.	Svendborg, Denmark
62 Gibson Jr., Johnny	6-4/345	Sr.	Dumas, AR
67 Hall, Tyler	6-4/297	So.	Maumelle, AR
69 Hays, Dylan	6-3/299	So.	Little Rock, AR
64 Horn, Audry	6-2/299	Fr.	Benton, AR
74 Jackson, Colton	6-5/299	Jr.	Conway, AR
79 Merrick, Jalen	6-4/345	Jr.	Oak Hill, FL
78 Wagner, Dalton	6-9/275	Fr.	Spring Grove, IL
60 Wallace, Brian	6-6/323	Sr.	Florissant, MO

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3 Agim, McTelvin	6-3/280	Jr.	Texarkana, TX
86 Bell, Jamario	6-5/247	Jr.	Junction City, AR
41 Capps, Austin	6-4/301	Jr.	Star City, AR
97 DePrato, Brandon	6-4/235	So.	Cypress, TX
7 Guidry, Briston	6-2/304	So.	Kenner, LA
92 Hale, Elias	6-4/228	So.	Fayetteville, AR
95 Hall, Jake	6-5/253	Sr.	Springdale, AR
73 Malone, Deion	6-3/291	Sr.	Batesville, MS
42 Marshall, Jonathan	6-3/307	So.	Shepherd, TX
93 Nichols, Isaiah	6-3/267	Fr.	Springdale, AR
71 Porter, David	6-3/241	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
10 Ramsey, Randy	6-4/227	Sr.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
6 Richardson, Gabe	6-3/247	Jr.	Decatur, GA
52 Smith, T.J.	6-3/306	Jr.	Moultrie, GA
91 Taylor II, Michael	6-2/252	Sr.	Orlando, FL
90 Watts, Armon	6-5/311	Sr.	St. Louis, MO

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
53 Brasuell, Ben	6-1/195	So.	Benton, AR
46 Carter, Damani	5-11/239	Jr.	Fayetteville, AR
54 Collins, Terrell	6-0/244	So.	St. Louis, MO
22 Edwards, Deon	6-1/215	So.	Clermont, FL
40 Fisher, Kyrei	6-1/238	So.	Tulsa, OK
23 Greenlaw, Dre	6-0/226	Sr.	Fayetteville, AR
8 Harris, De'Jon	6-0/239	Jr.	Harvey, LA
27 Henry, Hayden	6-2/211	So.	Little Rock, AR
4 Jean-Baptiste, Alexy	6-2/230	So.	Pompano Beach, FL
20 LaFrance, Giovanni	6-1/242	So.	New Orleans, LA
36 McClure, D'Vone	6-2/222	So.	Rixey, AR
31 Morgan, Grant	5-11/230	So.	Greenwood, AR
29 Munson, Derrick	5-11/207	So.	New Orleans, LA
47 Pennington, Tyler	5-10/220	Fr.	Cary, IL
34 Phillips, Tyler	6-1/221	Jr.	North Little Rock, AR
16 Pool, Bumper	6-2/214	Fr.	Lucas, TX
56 Surrell, Ma'Laizh	5-10/228	Fr.	Little Rock, AR
33 Walker, Dee	6-2/213	So.	Moultrie, GA
49 Williams, McKinley	6-4/210	Fr.	Sheridan, AR

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
18 Berry, Matt	5-10/189	Jr.	Booneville, AR
45 Blair, Simeon	5-10/197	Fr.	Pine Bluff, AR
21 Brown, Montaric	6-0/181	Fr.	Ashdown, AR
1 Calloway, Chevin	5-10/183	So.	Dallas, TX
2 Curl, Kamren	6-2/188	So.	San Diego, CA
32 Curtis, Jordon	6-0/176	Fr.	Jenks, OK
13 Dalton, Nate	6-3/188	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
15 Hernandez, Korey	5-10/180	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
39 Keaton, Byron	5-10/179	Jr.	Camden, AR
26 Lucas, Ryder	6-0/185	Sr.	The Woodlands, TX
24 McClellion, Jarques	6-0/173	Fr.	Lake Worth, FL
38 Miller, Reid	5-9/202	Sr.	Hollidaysburg, PA
28 Minchew, Jayden	6-1/182	So.	Springdale, AR
11 Pulley, Ryan	5-11/199	Sr.	Fort Myers, FL
9 Ramirez, Santos	6-2/195	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
30 Richardson II, Kevin	5-11/185	Sr.	Jacksonville, AR
25 Smith, Micahh	6-0/204	So.	Marshall, TX
14 Tutt, Britto	6-1/171	Jr.	Augusta, GA
37 Young, Brenden	6-1/202	Jr.	Little Rock, AR

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
18 Johnson, Blake (P)	6-0/169	Jr.	Long Beach, CA
19 Limpert, Connor (K)	6-1/170	Jr.	Allen, TX
43 Madden, George (LS)	6-1/213	Jr.	Blanchard, OK
48 Silver, Jordan (LS)	6-2/220	Fr.	Branson, MO
92 Stephens, Chad (P)	5-11/196	So.	Owasso, OK

SCOUTING THE RAZORBACKS

Opposing Coaches Size up Arkansas

"I feel really badly for Chad (Morris), who has been put in a difficult situation. That roster was built for (Bret) Bielema's run-first, play-action offense. Chad will spend at least the first two years turning over that roster to fit his scheme. ... One thing Chad will benefit from is the way Bret ran a clean program. There won't be character problems in that locker room. As a new coach, that's a huge relief. Those guys may not be the perfect fit for what Chad wants to do, but they'll bust their ass for him. There won't be push back, at least at the level most of us deal with when you arrive as the new guy on the block. Look, new guys are there because the other guy failed. The other guy usually failed because he lost the team. Bret never lost that team. ... I just can't see 270-pound Cole Kelley running Chad's offense. My guess is Chad gets him to drop 20-30 pounds. He has a strong arm, though he wasn't exactly the most accurate guy on the field. Whoever plays quarterback is more than likely a bridge to Chad's first big quarterback recruit next year. ... I don't expect any change with (new defensive coordinator) John Chavis in charge. His defensive lines have always been aggressive and given a lot of leeway. Their problem has been in the back seven. They're bad in coverage, and they haven't had that dominating linebacker. That has to be fixed. ... The best thing Chad will do for Arkansas — and I think he's a terrific Xs and Os guy — is recruit. He got a lot of those key guys, including Deshaun Watson, that turned things around at Clemson. He has to do that at Arkansas. Bret couldn't recruit Texas the way Chad can."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 SEC

Aug. 31	vs. Florida A&M #	W	49-7
Sept. 9	TCU	L	7-28
Sept. 23	vs. Texas A&M % (ot)	L	43-50
Sept. 30	New Mexico State	W	42-24
Oct. 7	at South Carolina	L	22-48
Oct. 14	at Alabama	L	9-41
Oct. 21	Auburn	L	20-52
Oct. 28	at Ole Miss	W	38-37
Nov. 4	Coastal Carolina	W	39-38
Nov. 11	at LSU	L	10-33
Nov. 18	Mississippi State	L	21-28
Nov. 24	Missouri	L	45-48

#Little Rock %Arlington



JONATHAN NANCE

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Austin Allen	187	105	1,427	10	5
Cole Kelley	**151**	**87**	**1,038**	**8**	**4**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
David Williams	117	656	5.6	8
Devwah Whaley	**127**	**559**	**4.4**	**7**
Chase Hayden	**61**	**326**	**5.3**	**4**
T.J. Hammonds	**32**	**262**	**8.2**	**1**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Jonathan Nance	**37**	**539**	**14.6**	**5**
Deon Stewart	**33**	**404**	**12.2**	**3**
Jordan Jones	**21**	**401**	**19.1**	**3**
Cheyenne O'Grady	**21**	**132**	**6.3**	**2**

KICKING: **Connor Limpert, 8-9 FGs, 33-34 PATs, 57 points**

TACKLES: **De'Jon Harris, 115; Dre Greenlaw, 103**

SACKS: **De'Jon Harris, 3.5**

INTERCEPTIONS: **Kevin Richardson II,** Henre' Toliver, 3

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	28.8 ppg	8	61
Rushing	168.0 ypg	7	61
Passing	205.4 ypg	7	83
Total	373.4 ypg	9	94
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	36.2 ppg	14	115
Rushing	196.1 ypg	11	98
Passing	242.2 ypg	12	93
Total	438.3 ypg	13	102
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	9	72

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

TRU STORIES The Razorbacks became believers in strength and conditioning coach Tru Carroll and his staff during the winter. "The conditioning was way better than what we did in the past," linebacker De'Jon Harris says. Asked about his physique, cornerback Ryan Pulley said: "We've been working hard the last six, seven weeks, lifting hard, trying to get more buff, as y'all can see." Carroll and his staff got an ovation after the first day of spring drills.

HOG WAGON Chad Morris calls Arkansas "a sleeping giant," and he plans to make it popular to wear Hogs apparel around the country. "This program, this university, this state, they're so ready for this," Morris says. "Once we get it going — and we're going to get it going, that's all we've ever done, is win — it's going to take off. We want this to be popular, to wear the Hog around. While it may not be as popular right now, I'm OK with that. Great. That's OK. Because it will be. You better get on the bandwagon now. Is it going to take time? Absolutely. Everything's going to take some time."

SOSA SLANT McTelvin "Sosa" Agim, one of the team's top defensive players, has worked at end, tackle and nose guard on the Arkansas front during his two-year career. During the spring, Agim was working at nose under new coordinator John Chavis. Agim, who had weighed as much as 290 pounds last year, got down to about 280 pounds to start spring after early morning runs followed later in the day by a second workout. "The weight drop has got me feeling back like an athlete again," Agim says. Chavis says Agim accepted the move inside. "He's embracing his role," the coach says. "He's a tremendous young man. There's no question he's one of our 11 best."

WAKE-UP CALL Quarterback Cole Kelley called his arrest last November on suspicion of driving while intoxicated a wake-up call. He was pulled over by Fayetteville police in the early morning hours after a road loss at LSU and was wearing a medical brace. He did not consent to a field sobriety test. "You can make all the excuses in the world [but] I just messed up," Kelley says. "I've always felt so ashamed since that happened. I wanted to release something and apologize to everybody, but my lawyer advised against it during the process. I'm so sorry to the Razorback nation. They have done nothing but love me since I stepped on campus."

QUARTER GAMES Morris and his staff broke up the offseason into "quarters," that began with winter conditioning and testing in the first quarter. The second quarter is defined as the length of spring drills, with a motto of "one-play warrior," which stretched from March 1 through the two practices after the Red-White game, which was held off campus in Little Rock on April 7. The third quarter will go from the end of spring drills through the second summer session. The fourth quarter starts after that, with the stretch drive into fall camp leading into the season opener on Sept. 1 vs. Eastern Illinois.



COLTON JACKSON

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.2	84
Defense	30.2	86
Margin	**-1.0**	**80**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	43.2%	48
Defense	46.7%	116
Margin	**-3.5%**	**95**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.6	67
Defense	6.5	116
Margin	**-0.9**	**105**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.7	37
Defense	5.1	119
Margin	**-0.4**	**96**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.1	67
Actual	-1	71
Margin	**-0.9**	**77**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

13.1

Defensive coordinator John Chavis has his work cut out for him in attempting to bring some disruption to the Arkansas defense. The Hogs made run stuffs at or behind the line on just 13.1 percent of non-sack carries last year, worst in the SEC and second worst in all of FBS. In all, they allowed a 46.7 percent success rate, 116th in the country and worst in the league.

85.4

Few offenses will undergo more of an identity change in 2018 than the Razorbacks. In 2017, Arkansas forced opponents to make solo tackles on just 69.9 percent of all tackles, 98th in FBS. Chad Morris' SMU offense, meanwhile: 85.4 percent, eighth in the country. SMU also attempted one play for very 23.6 seconds (30th) to Arkansas' one per 28.0 (104th).

1,344

The Arkansas receiving corps could thrive with a larger load. Returning wideouts Deon Stewart, Jonathan Nance and Jordan Jones combined for 1,344 yards at 14.8 yards per catch and 8.3 yards per target. At SMU (Chad Morris' last stop), the top three receivers last year: 3,137 yards at a comparable 14.1 yards per catch and 9.1 yards per target.

2.2

Standing out has been an issue for Arkansas since Bobby Petrino was forced to ride off into the sunset. In one year under John L. Smith and five under Bret Bielema, the Hogs have averaged only 2.2 conference wins per season. They caught fire late in 2015, winning four of five SEC games. Otherwise, they're 9–34 since 2012.

Jay Biggerstaff

2018 SIGNEES

Chad Morris' first signing class is not likely to be remembered for its quantity — Arkansas signed only 17 players — but the Razorbacks hope it will produce some quality for the long haul and potential stars.

Among the three early enrollees, receiver Mike Woods appears to have a quicker path to playing time than defensive lineman Isaiah Nichols and linebacker Bumper Pool. Nichols is a high-caliber athlete who is still relatively new to football and should improve rapidly.

The coaches believe that their 10 signees on defense will be the bedrock for a class that will lead a defensive renaissance for the program.

Up front, heavily recruited Dorian Gerald and Nick Fulwider could develop into elite pass rushers. The Razorbacks scored a key recruiting victory in landing Gerald, a top junior college prospect. Morris raves over the nimble feet and motor of massive Billy Ferrell, a 6'3", 331-pounder who can run and is the kind of potentially dominating interior player the Razorbacks have had trouble signing. Courtre' Alexander has the kind of frame at 6'5", 260 pounds that could help him develop into a prototypical pass rusher. Linebackers Pool and Andrew Parker are expected to be long-term contributors.

On the back end, safeties Joseph Foucha and Myles Mason and in-state signee Ladarrius Bishop are seen as future standouts who should help in providing quality depth this season.

Quarterbacks Connor Noland and John Stephen Jones are well-regarded athletes who have state championships in their backgrounds. Noland, a two-sport star who is expected to split time as a pitcher for Dave Van Horn's baseball team, is the bigger of the two. Jones, grandson of Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, has consistently outperformed expectations during his career.

Running back Rakeem Boyd, a Texas A&M signee in 2016, has the talent to contribute quickly in a loaded backfield. All three offensive line signees — Silas Robinson, Ryan Winkel and Noah Gatlin — are likely headed toward a redshirt season.

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	5
Offensive Linemen	3
Defensive Backs	3
Quarterbacks	2
Linebackers	2
Running Backs	1
Wide Receivers	1
BY STATE	
Arkansas	5
Texas	5
Louisiana	2
Alabama	1
Georgia	1
Oklahoma	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1

Recruit Spotlight

Mike Woods

WR • Magnolia, TX

Mike Woods frequently made the three-hour trip from Magnolia, Texas, to the SMU campus in Dallas last fall to watch what he thought would be his future team. A three-star receiver, Woods committed to SMU in February 2017 and remained firm despite receiver offers from several Power 5 schools.

But when Chad Morris took the head-coaching reins at Arkansas in December — and brought most of his offensive staff with him — Woods didn't hesitate before going whole Hog. "It was a no brainer," says Woods, a two-time 1,000-yard receiver at Magnolia High School. "As soon as they went, I already knew."

Woods describes his relationship with Justin Stepp, Morris' wide receivers coach at both stops, as being "like best friends" for the past year. "Ever since they offered me, we've talked like every day."

Woods joins a crowded crew of wideouts for the Hogs. He enrolled early and made several standout plays during spring drills. "It's been good," Woods says. "I've grown as a player, as a person and as a student. It's on you to go to class and be where you're supposed to be. I've just been growing as a person and knowing my responsibilities."

In the spring, Morris was pleased with the lone receiver signee in his first class at Arkansas. "He's very dynamic and explosive," Morris says. "He's got great size."

Woods' speed, his ability to attack 50-50 balls and his knack for high-pointing deep balls are all key assets.

And he's happy to be jumping aboard the first year of the Morris regime.

"Oh definitely, the highest level of college football, the highest division in the SEC West," Woods says. "Best facilities. It was a no brainer."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Courtre' Alexander	DE	6-5/260	Owasso, OK	★★★	★★★	★★★	751
Ladarrius Bishop	CB	6-0/190	Ashdown, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★★	579
Rakeem Boyd	RB	6-0/200	Houston, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	106*
Billy Ferrell	DT	6-3/331	Fordyce, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	525
Joseph Foucha	S	5-11/194	New Orleans, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	606
Nick Fulwider	DE	6-7/249	Tyrone, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	759
Noah Gatlin	OT	6-7/300	Jonesboro, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	795
Dorian Gerald	DE	6-3/260	Florence, SC	★★★	★★★★	★★★	27*
John Stephen Jones	QB	5-11/185	Dallas, TX	★★★	★★★	★★	1,678
Myles Mason	S	6-2/205	Trussville, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	431
Isaiah Nichols	DE	6-3/265	Springdale, AR	★★★	★★★	★★★	818
Connor Noland	QB	6-2/205	Greenwood, AR	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	341
Andrew Parker	ILB	6-2/225	New Orleans, LA	★★★	★★★	★★	1,614
Bumper Pool	ILB	6-3/213	Lucas, TX	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	339
Silas Robinson	OT	6-4/300	Yoakum, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,857
Ryan Winkel	OT	6-6/286	Memphis, TN	★★★	★★★	★★	1,210
Michael Woods	WR	6-2/180	Magnolia, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	542

*junior college transfer

AUBURN TIGERS

National Forecast: 7 /// SEC West Prediction: 2

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Washington #
Sept. 8	Alabama State
Sept. 15	LSU
Sept. 22	Arkansas
Sept. 29	Southern Miss
Oct. 6	at Mississippi State
Oct. 13	Tennessee
Oct. 20	at Ole Miss
Nov. 3	Texas A&M
Nov. 10	at Georgia
Nov. 17	Liberty
Nov. 24	at Alabama

#Atlanta

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 10-2, 6-2 SEC

Auburn ended Alabama's three-year run at the top of the West Division last season but fell one win shy of reaching the CFB Playoff. Maintaining the top spot in the West will hinge on how quickly Gus Malzahn's team replaces key cogs on both sides of the ball. Jarrett Stidham, now in his second season at Auburn, is one of the SEC's top quarterbacks but will be working behind a revamped offensive line. The Tigers have a promising collection of running backs, but Kerryon Johnson's production won't be easy to replace. On defense, edge rusher Jeff Holland and cornerback Carlton Davis are huge losses for a unit that limited teams to 18.5 points per game in 2017. After having a favorable home schedule last fall, Auburn must visit both Georgia and Alabama this season.

Postseason: Sugar Bowl vs. Oklahoma

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Gus Malzahn

RECORD AT SCHOOL
45-22 (5 years)

CAREER RECORD
54-25 (6 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Kodi Burns, Chip Lindsey

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Kevin Steele

LOCATION
Auburn, AL

STADIUM
Jordan-Hare Stadium (87,451)

In the world of Power 5 football, Auburn coach Gus Malzahn could find himself residing in a relatively unique domain of expectations. The Tigers' sixth-year coach just signed a seven-year contract extension for $49 million, with $36.75 million guaranteed, after a 10–4 season in which he won the West Division of the SEC and defeated both National Championship Game participants (Alabama and Georgia) during the regular season. Now, though, many fans will define an Auburn season as a success or failure based on whether it defeats those two rivals — and the Tigers will be facing both of those teams on the road in 2018.



RYAN DAVIS

"As I said before, we worked extremely hard to get here to this point, and we've got a very good foundation built, and I think the best is yet to come," Malzahn said after signing his new contract at Auburn.

In every sense of the phrase, the Auburn administration, fans and Malzahn himself are about to find out if you do truly get what you pay for.

"Football, certainly, is the driving engine of it all. This is an enterprise," Auburn athletics director Allen Greene said after being hired on Jan. 19. "Something that I appreciate with this opportunity is having the chance to sit down with Coach Malzahn. I think the world of him, and I'm really looking forward to working with him and supporting him to the best of my ability."

QUARTERBACKS Few players in college football were as eagerly anticipated by their fan base last year as Jarrett Stidham. After suffering through uneven quarterback play for several seasons, the Auburn faithful were ready for the one-time Baylor Bear to take control of the team's offense. There were some rough patches in his first season, but it's safe to say that Stidham delivered the goods. He finished the year with 3,158 yards passing with 18 touchdowns and only six interceptions. The big play returned to the Auburn offense as well. Stidham ranked seventh nationally with 17 passing plays of 40 yards or more; Auburn had a total of only 18 in the two years prior to his arrival. With Stidham having undergone an offseason surgical procedure on his non-throwing shoulder, Malik Willis took over the first-team reps during most of the spring, and the former three-star prospect will enter 2018 as the backup option. Willis offers a completely different look than Stidham; he's more of a threat to do damage with his legs but isn't nearly as polished throwing the ball.

RUNNING BACKS If there were ever a safe bet in college football, it would be the prediction that Auburn would have a 1,000-yard rusher this season. In fact, Auburn and Boise State are the only two programs nationally to have a ball carrier hit that mark in each of the last nine seasons. After watching Kerryon Johnson (the leading rusher in the SEC last year with 1,391 yards) and Kamyrn Pettway (the fifth-leading rusher in the SEC in 2016 with 1,224 yards) leave early for the NFL Draft, Auburn will quickly turn to Kam Martin and a host of relative newcomers. Martin, a 182-pound speedster, aver-

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

aged 6.1 yards per carry in limited action during the 2017 season, but now — in his third year at the school — he will likely get a shot at a much bigger workload. Martin will likely emerge with the starting job from a six-player battle in preseason camp that will include redshirt freshman JaTarvious Whitlow and four-star prospect Asa Martin, named Alabama Mr. Football after his senior season at Austin High School in Courtland.

RECEIVERS Auburn had a lot of potential in this positional group heading into spring, but the injury bug hit in a big way. Eli Stove and Will Hastings, who combined for 55 receptions totaling 790 yards and four touchdowns in 2017, aren't likely to be ready for the beginning of the 2018 season after both suffered torn ACLs in March. The Tigers won't know until late in the summer when (or if) either will be ready to play. "I think the only thing I can say [that was frustrating in the spring] is obviously the two receivers we lost with ACLs," Malzahn says. "That was a very tough deal. We've just got to have other guys step up. We have no choice. It has given some other guys opportunities." The lack of depth created by the injuries will add some pressure for veterans Ryan Davis, Darius Slayton and Nate Craig-Myers. In 2017, Davis set the Auburn single-season record for receptions with 84 after having nine games with six or more catches. Slayton caught only 29 passes but averaged 22.2 yards per catch and scored five touchdowns. Craig-Myers was also a big-play threat, averaging 17.8 yards on his 16 receptions. Don't expect the tight end position to serve as a major target in Auburn's pass game as this group has accounted for only six catches over the last three years.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Auburn lost some key pieces on the offensive line to graduation, including All-SEC selections Braden Smith and Austin Golson. In response to the loss of experienced players and the position coach (Herb Hand left for Texas), Auburn decided to turn back the clock by hiring old-school assistant J.B. Grimes, who had been in this spot with the Tigers from 2013-15. "I'm excited about J.B. because we know exactly what we're getting from Day 1," Malzahn says. "He's one of the best teachers that I've ever been around in my 28 years of coaching. We're really happy to have him back for that reason." Grimes' commitment to fundamentals and keeping positional responsibilities simple seemed to resonate in the spring. The Tigers appear to have three spots figured out — left tackle (Prince Tega Wanogho), left guard (Marquel Harrell) and right guard (Mike Horton).

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Normally, the loss of a player like Jeff Holland, who led the SEC in sacks for most of the 2017 season and ended



QB **JARRETT STIDHAM**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY TIGERS

JARRETT STIDHAM, QB His 3,158 passing yards in 2017 were the second most all-time at Auburn. His 246 completions set a single-season record.

MARQUEL HARRELL, OG The only returning starter on the offensive line from either the Peach Bowl or SEC Championship Game is expected to hold down the left guard spot.

DERRICK BROWN, DT A projected top-10 pick in 2019, Brown is expected to be a major force both rushing the passer and stopping the run.

DESHAUN DAVIS, LB The Tigers' leading tackler in 2017 with 82 returns as the play caller in the middle of the defense.

RYAN DAVIS, WR Davis broke the school's single-season record for receptions (84), though he averaged only 9.7 yards per catch from the slot.

KEY LOSSES

KERRYON JOHNSON, RB 2017 SEC Offensive Player of the Year was also one of the league's biggest surprises. Rushed for 1,391 yards on 285 attempts.

JEFF HOLLAND, DE/LB Holland recorded 10 sacks before leaving early for the NFL Draft. His pass-rushing skills will be missed.

AUSTIN GOLSON, OL At some point during his college career, Golson lined up at each of the five offensive line spots.

TRAY MATTHEWS, S Three-year starter at free safety had 181 tackles and four interceptions during his career.

DANIEL CARLSON, PK The first-ever three-time Lou Groza finalist will be remembered as one of the most reliable kickers in Auburn history.

RISING STAR

Auburn is relying on more than good genetics with its kicking game as redshirt freshman **ANDERS CARLSON** prepares to take over for his older brother Daniel. This wasn't simply a nepotism scholarship offer, as Anders was one of the nation's best kicking prospects in 2017. He connected on a 62-yard field goal in a spring scrimmage.

with a total of 10, would be a cause for major concern about the pass rush. Not at Auburn, and not the way the Tigers recruit defensive linemen. "It kind of goes back to the theory we've talked about before that if you wait for them to graduate before you replace them, you're a little bit far behind," Auburn defensive coordinator Kevin Steele says. Auburn will likely challenge Clemson for the unofficial title of the nation's most dominant defensive front thanks to the return of starters Derrick Brown, Dontavius Russell and Marlon Davidson — all of whom are expected to be NFL Draft picks when their college careers are over. The frontrunner to replace Holland at the pass-rushing Buck position will be sophomore T.D. Moultry, a former four-star prospect with a high energy level who has already been physically transformed from a linebacker into a speedy rush end and mismatch for offensive tackles. Nick Coe, a third-year sophomore, will also have a significant impact as a backup behind Davidson at one of the end spots. A former high school wrestler, Coe has the athleticism to slide inside as well.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)					
WR	**23**	**Ryan Davis (Sr.)**	11	Shedrick Jackson (Fr.)	
WR	**81**	**Darius Slayton (Jr.)**	**3**	**Nate Craig-Myers (Jr.)**	
LT	**76**	**Prince Tega Wanogho (Jr.)**	66	Bailey Sharp (Jr.)	
LG	77	Marquel Harrell (Jr.)	59	Brodarious Hamm (Fr.)	
C	54	Kaleb Kim (Jr.)	52	Nick Brahms (Fr.)	
RG	**64**	**Mike Horton (Jr.)**	56	Tashawn Manning (Fr.)	
RT	68	Austin Troxell (Fr.)	70	Calvin Ashley (Fr.)	
TE	85	Jalen Harris (Sr.)	80	Sal Cannella (Jr.)	
HB	**27**	**Chandler Cox (Sr.)**	99	Spencer Nigh (Jr.)	
QB	**8**	**Jarrett Stidham (Jr.)**	14	Malik Willis (So.)	
RB	9	Kam Martin (Jr.)	28	JaTarvious Whitlow (Fr.)	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	**3**	**Marlon Davidson (Jr.)**	91	Nick Coe (So.)	
DT	**5**	**Derrick Brown (Jr.)**	79	Andrew Williams (Sr.)	
NT	**95**	**Dontavius Russell (Sr.)**	94	Tyrone Truesdell (So.)	
DE	55	T.D. Moultry (So.)	1	Big Kat Bryant (So.)	
OLB	49	Darrell Williams (Sr.)	31	Chandler Wooten (So.)	
ILB	**57**	**Deshaun Davis (Sr.)**	33	K.J. Britt (So.)	
OLB	48	Montavious Atkinson (Sr.)	51	Richard McBryde (Jr.)	
CB	**12**	**Jamel Dean (Jr.)**	14	Traivon Leonard (So.)	
CB	13	Javaris Davis (Jr.)	4	Noah Igbinoghene (So.)	
SS	24	Daniel Thomas (Jr.)	21	Smoke Monday (Fr.)	
FS	**20**	**Jeremiah Dinson (Jr.)**	9	Jamien Sherwood (Fr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	26	Anders Carlson (Fr.)	**KR**	4 Noah Igbinoghene (So.)	
P		Arryn Siposs (Fr.)	**PR**	23 Ryan Davis (Sr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

LINEBACKERS Auburn has very few concerns at the linebacker position beyond trying to make everybody in the group content in terms of playing time. The team's top two returning tacklers can be found in the second level of the defense — Deshaun Davis (82) and Darrell Williams (57). Williams is probably the team's best coverage linebacker. Montavious Atkinson, a 218-pound hybrid player, got five starts in 2017 and is a valuable talent who can be used in blitz situations or in the secondary to give the defensive scheme a true 4-2-5 look.

DEFENSIVE BACKS This is the group that has the Auburn coaching staff concerned — not because of poor play, but due to a lack of experienced depth returning for the 2018 season. Auburn already moved wide receiver Noah Igbinoghene to a cornerback spot in the spring to account for losing two starting safeties and cornerback Carlton Davis to the NFL. Auburn will rely on the veteran leadership of Javaris Davis and Jamel Dean at cornerback. Some true freshmen likely will be forced into action when the Tigers go to nickel and dime packages.

SPECIALISTS For the first time in five years, Auburn will be without placekicker Daniel Carlson, the program's all-time leader in scoring. So now they simply turn to his younger brother. Anders Carlson was one of the nation's top prospects at the position two years ago and gives Auburn a similar level of confidence in the kicking game. A former Australian Rules Football player is expected to take over punting duties as 25-year-old Arryn Siposs arrives on campus in the summer. Auburn hasn't had a punt return or kick return for a touchdown in the last three years.

Chris Covatta

2018 AUBURN ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
16	Adams, Devin	6-3/244	Sr.	Mobile, AL
15	Appleton, Wil	5-11/196	Fr.	Albertville, AL
1	Gatewood, Joey	6-5/235	Fr.	St. Augustine, FL
8	Stidham, Jarrett	6-3/214	Jr.	Stephenville, TX
14	Willis, Malik	6-1/202	So.	Atlanta, GA

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
5	Barrett, Devan	6-0/185	So.	Tampa, FL
43	Chambers, Cedric	5-7/187	Jr.	Valley, AL
27	Cox, Chandler	6-1/239	Sr.	Apopka, FL
45	Cramer, Chase	5-10/205	Jr.	Orlando, FL
20	Martin, Asa	5-11/200	Fr.	Courtland, AL
9	Martin, Kam	5-10/182	Jr.	Port Arthur, TX
25	Medary, Alex	6-0/186	Fr.	Orlando, FL
32	Miller, Malik	5-11/225	So.	Huntsville, AL
99	Nigh, Spencer	6-0/270	Jr.	Magnolia, TX
37	Tolbert, C.J.	5-7/187	Sr.	Dadeville, AL
28	Whitlow, JaTarvious	6-0/216	Fr.	LaFayette, AL

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3	Craig-Myers, Nate	6-2/213	Jr.	Dade City, FL
23	Davis, Ryan	5-9/175	Sr.	St. Petersburg, FL
33	Hastings, Will	5-10/167	Sr.	Little Rock, AR
11	Jackson, Shedrick	6-0/193	Fr.	Hoover, AL
89	King, Griffin	5-10/180	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
17	McClain, Marquis	6-2/226	So.	Crestview, FL
35	Moss, James Owens	5-9/184	So.	Opelika, AL
87	Ozmint, Pace	6-1/181	So.	Glencoe, AL
81	Slayton, Darius	6-2/190	Jr.	Norcross, GA
12	Stove, Eli	6-0/183	Jr.	Niceville, FL

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
80	Cannella, Sal	6-5/228	Jr.	Schaumburg, IL
85	Harris, Jalen	6-4/252	Sr.	Montgomery, AL
47	Shenker, John Samuel	6-3/235	Fr.	Albany, GA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
70	Ashley, Calvin	6-6/350	Fr.	Orlando, FL
52	Brahms, Nick	6-3/276	Fr.	Navarre, FL
65	Brown, Tucker	6-3/288	Sr.	Trussville, AL
67	Carr, Tyler	6-5/316	Jr.	Southside, AL
53	Gambill, Phelps	6-5/282	Fr.	Nashville, TN
59	Hamm, Brodarious	6-5/344	Fr.	Griffin, GA
77	Harrell, Marquel	6-3/308	Jr.	Fairburn, GA
64	Horton, Mike	6-4/318	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
75	Kelley, Trent	6-5/280	Fr.	Phenix City, AL
54	Kim, Kaleb	6-4/293	Jr.	Buford, GA
56	Manning, Tashawn	6-3/320	Fr.	Apopka, FL
61	Meneely, Ryan	6-2/322	Jr.	McDonough, GA
63	Nance, Peyton	5-11/318	Fr.	Attalla, AL
72	Sammons, Prince Micheal	6-7/292	So.	Blanchester, OH
66	Sharp, Bailey	6-5/300	Jr.	Marietta, GA
68	Troxell, Austin	6-6/292	Fr.	Gurley, AL
76	Wanogho, Prince Tega	6-7/301	Jr.	Montgomery, AL

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
5	Brown, Derrick	6-5/316	Jr.	Sugar Hill, GA
1	Bryant, Big Kat	6-5/224	So.	Cordele, GA
91	Coe, Nick	6-5/270	So.	Asheboro, NC
3	Davidson, Marlon	6-3/282	Jr.	Greenville, AL
92	Jackson, Alec	6-5/280	Fr.	Montgomery, AL
62	Johnson, Jaunta'vius	6-2/324	Jr.	Lincoln, AL
55	Moultry, T.D.	6-2/240	So.	Birmingham, AL
44	Newkirk, Daquan	6-3/295	Jr.	Orlando, FL
95	Russell, Dontavius	6-3/310	Sr.	Carrollton, GA
94	Truesdell, Tyrone	6-2/338	So.	Augusta, GA
97	Walker, Gary	5-11/270	Jr.	Toccoa, GA
79	Williams, Andrew	6-4/286	Sr.	McDonough, GA

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
48	Atkinson, Montavious	6-1/218	Sr.	Fairburn, GA
33	Britt, K.J.	6-0/239	So.	Oxford, AL
47	Carter, Craig	5-11/198	Jr.	Milton, GA
57	Davis, Deshaun	5-11/246	Sr.	Prichard, AL
35	Dean, Tanner	6-3/202	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
41	French, Josh	5-11/209	So.	Birmingham, AL
36	Marsh, Josh	6-2/209	Fr.	Decatur, AL
51	McBryde, Richard	6-1/237	Jr.	Troy, AL
39	Muschamp, Robert	6-1/244	Jr.	Rome, GA
38	Tindall, Barrett	6-0/202	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
49	Williams, Darrell	6-2/244	Sr.	Hoover, AL
31	Wooten, Chandler	6-2/237	So.	Acworth, GA

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
16	Askew, Malcolm	5-11/182	Fr.	McCalla, AL
22	Broussard Jr., John	5-11/172	Jr.	Phenix City, AL
13	Davis, Javaris	5-10/186	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
12	Dean, Jamel	6-2/215	Jr.	Cocoa, FL
20	Dinson, Jeremiah	6-0/186	Jr.	Miami, FL
4	Igbinoghene, Noah	5-11/186	So.	Trussville, AL
46	Guice, Devin	5-8/160	So.	Opelika, AL
14	Leonard, Traivon	6-0/191	So.	West Palm Beach, FL
21	Monday, Smoke	6-2/180	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
18	Myers, Jayvaughn	6-1/192	So.	Dade City, FL
15	Peters, Jordyn	6-1/185	So.	Muscle Shoals, AL
45	Rogers, Jacob	5-11/205	So.	Goodwater, AL
32	Sherrod, Sam	5-11/198	So.	Birmingham, AL
9	Sherwood, Jamien	6-2/200	Fr.	Jensen Beach, FL
24	Thomas, Daniel	5-11/203	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
6	Tutt, Christian	5-11/185	Fr.	Thomson, GA

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
26	Carlson, Anders (K)	6-5/200	Fr.	Colorado Springs, CO
40	Horn, Beau (K/P)	5-9/192	Fr.	Mobile, AL
31	Ledbetter, Sage (K)	6-0/181	So.	Auburn, AL
41	Marshall, Aidan (P)	5-11/163	So.	Winchester, VA
43	Shannon, Ian (K/P)	6-3/222	Jr.	Marietta, GA
53	Smith, Clarke (LS)	6-3/226	So.	Leeds, AL
60	Taylor, Bill (LS)	6-3/227	Fr.	Northport, AL

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size up Auburn

"It took more than half the season, but Jarrett Stidham really turned into a legit SEC quarterback. Not saying any of us thought he wouldn't, but you could tell it took time before Gus (Malzahn) and his staff trusted him, and I guarantee he's going to take a huge step from where he was last season. ... Auburn surprised folks last year because they were so good on the lines of scrimmage. Will Muschamp was there for one year as defensive coordinator, but he made such an impact on the way Auburn recruited. He pushed the idea of building from the inside out, from the lines to the skill players. That's where Auburn is right now, that's why they will continue to grow under Gus. ... The defensive line has been the biggest growth area under Gus. They're serious about it, and they're as good as anyone in our league on the two-deep. Gus' offense, for some reason, has been treated as a high-flyin', pass-happy offense. Gus' offense is based on power running, pure and simple. They may run between the tackles differently than others with some zone-read deception, but it's power ball. It sets up everything they do in the pass game, and that means they have to find a go-to tailback. I wouldn't worry about that; (Kamryn) Pettway was a fullback one year, and one of the best tailbacks in our league the next. ... Auburn got over the hump with Alabama last year, and I really feel like they exhaled heading into the SEC Championship Game. Everyone was talking about Georgia as the team to knock off Alabama as SEC king. Auburn had better personnel than Georgia last year. But you've got to produce every week."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 7-1 SEC

Sept. 2	Georgia Southern	W	41-7
Sept. 9	at Clemson	L	6-14
Sept. 16	Mercer	W	24-10
Sept. 23	at Missouri	W	51-14
Sept. 30	Mississippi State	W	49-10
Oct. 7	Ole Miss	W	44-23
Oct. 14	at LSU	L	23-27
Oct. 21	at Arkansas	W	52-20
Nov. 4	at Texas A&M	W	42-27
Nov. 11	Georgia	W	40-17
Nov. 18	UL Monroe	W	42-14
Nov. 25	Alabama	W	26-14
Dec. 2	vs. Georgia #	L	7-28
Jan. 1	vs. UCF %	L	27-34

#Atlanta %Peach Bowl



DESHAUN DAVIS

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Jarrett Stidham	**370**	**246**	**3,158**	**18**	**6**
RUSHING	**ATT**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Kerryon Johnson	285	1,391	4.9	18	
Kam Martin	**74**	**453**	**6.1**	**2**	
Eli Stove	**30**	**315**	**10.5**	**2**	
Kamryn Pettway	76	305	4.0	6	
RECEIVING	**REC**	**YDS**	**AVG**	**TD**	
Ryan Davis	**84**	**815**	**9.7**	**5**	
Darius Slayton	**29**	**643**	**22.2**	**5**	
Eli Stove	**29**	**265**	**9.1**	**0**	
Will Hastings	**26**	**525**	**20.2**	**4**	
Kerryon Johnson	**24**	**194**	**8.1**	**2**	

KICKING: Daniel Carlson, 23-31 FGs, 57-57 PATs, 126 points

TACKLES: **Deshaun Davis, 82**; Tray Matthews, 59

SACKS: Jeff Holland, 10.0

INTERCEPTIONS: **Javaris Davis, 2**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	33.9 ppg	4	25
Rushing	218.3 ypg	4	26
Passing	233.4 ypg	5	65
Total	451.6 ypg	3	26
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.5 ppg	3	11
Rushing	137.0 ypg	5	35
Passing	182.4 ypg	5	18
Total	319.4 ypg	5	14
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.07	7	71

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

RIVALS Auburn fans couldn't have enjoyed watching a National Championship Game that featured the school's top two rivals — especially after the Tigers had defeated both Georgia and Alabama during the regular season. Both of those wins came at home; this year, the Tigers will attempt to beat both Georgia and Bama away from home in the same season for the first time since 1987.

ON THE RUN Only two schools have had a 1,000-yard rusher in each of the last nine seasons: Auburn and Boise State. Auburn's 1,000-yard rushers during that span include seven tailbacks and two quarterbacks: Ben Tate (2009), Cam Newton (2010), Michael Dyer (2010 and 2011), Tre Mason (2012 and 2013), Nick Marshall (2013), Cameron Artis-Payne (2014), Peyton Barber (2015), Kamryn Pettway (2016) and Kerryon Johnson (2017). Dating back to his time as an assistant at Arkansas, Tulsa and Auburn, Gus Malzahn has produced 15 1,000-yard rushers in 12 years as a college head coach/offensive coordinator and at least one each season.

EXTRA GOOD Auburn kickers have converted 225 consecutive PAT attempts dating back to a 2013 game against Tennessee, the longest active streak in the FBS. Auburn will turn the kicking and kickoff duties over to freshman Anders Carlson, the younger brother of three-time Lou Groza Award finalist Daniel Carlson. The elder Carlson was one of only six SEC kickers all time to have a 100 percent success rate on extra points with at least 100 career attempts.

A PERFECT 10-WIN SEASON Auburn secured its 14th 10-win season and its first since 2013 with its 26–14 win over No. 1 Alabama in the Iron Bowl. Malzahn, who also won double-figure games in 2013, joined Pat Dye (four), Shug Jordan (three), Terry Bowden (two) and Tommy Tuberville (two) as the only coaches to lead the Tigers to multiple 10-win seasons. Malzahn was just the second coach, along with Bowden, to lead Auburn to two 10-win campaigns in his first five seasons.

THROW IT TO RYAN Ryan Davis set the Auburn single-season record for receptions with 84. He returns to school for his senior season in 2018 after ranking second in the conference in receptions per game with 6.0. Davis' first career 100-yard game came in the Iron Bowl victory over Alabama, when he had 11 receptions for 139 yards. Davis had nine games last season with six or more receptions. He also threw a touchdown pass in 2017, a 62-yard pitch-and-catch to Darius Slayton at Arkansas, which was the longest TD completion by a non-QB in school history.

SACK LUNCHES In 27 games under defensive coordinator Kevin Steele, the Auburn defense has recorded 62 sacks (2.3 per game) and has been held without a sack only four times. Auburn has recorded at least six tackles for a loss in 16 of those 27 games. The 62 sacks in 2016-17 are the most in consecutive seasons at Auburn since the Tigers recorded 63 sacks in 2009-10. The 37 last season were their most since 2005.



DERRICK BROWN

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	28.7	91
Defense	29.8	73
Margin	**-1.1**	**82**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	44.2%	41
Defense	33.5%	5
Margin	**+10.7%**	**9**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.2	33
Defense	4.7	8
Margin	**+1.5**	**14**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.6	56
Defense	3.3	3
Margin	**+1.3**	**7**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	+6.1	18
Actual	-1	71
Margin	**-7.1**	**116**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

+16.5

How good was Auburn in the middle of the season? In the nine games between Sept. 23 and Nov. 25, the Tigers beat the spread by at least 16.5 points five times. Vegas couldn't keep up with this team — until the end, when they underachieved by at least 16.5 points in each of the last two games.

-7.1

Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, Auburn's turnover margin should have been about plus-6.1. Instead, it was minus-1. This difference of minus-7.1 turnovers was the unluckiest in the SEC and one of the 15 worst in the country.

.200

Turnovers certainly didn't help the cause in three close losses last year, but Auburn is getting awfully acquainted with tight defeats. Malzahn began his tenure in 2013 and won 12 of his first 16 one-possession finishes. Since then? He and his Tigers are just 2–8 in such games, a win percentage of 0.200.

14.8

The Tigers were stuffed at or behind the line on just 14.8 percent of their non-sack carries (ninth in FBS) and averaged a solid 6.5 yards per play on first down (28th). This was good, because blitz protection was an issue: On passing downs (second-and-8 or more, third- or fourth-and-5 or more), Auburn gave up sacks on 9.7 percent of pass attempts (97th).

Chris Covatta

2018 SIGNEES

Auburn's 2018 recruiting class slipped out of the national top 10 for the first time since 2012 — the Tigers ranked 12th according to the 247Sports Composite — but it was still a quality class loaded with talent on both sides of the ball.

Auburn reloaded at wide receiver with four players — early signee Shedrick Jackson, four-star prospect Seth Williams, world-class track speedster Anthony Schwartz and four-star Georgia native Matthew Hill. The quartet of pass-catching threats is expected to resemble the highly touted 2016 class of Eli Stove, Nate Craig-Myers, Marquis McClain and Kyle Davis.

Jackson, a three-star receiver from Hoover (Ala.) High School, has solid football bloodlines — his uncle is Bo Jackson, the former Heisman Trophy winner and Auburn legend. Shedrick could be in position to play right away.

The Tigers signed dual-threat quarterback Joey Gatewood, though there is some question as to whether he will stick at the position long term.

With the knowledge that it was losing three starting linebackers to graduation following the 2018 season, Auburn reloaded with a trio of four-star backers from Georgia in Michael Harris, Zakoby McClain and Richard Jibunor as well as in-state product Josh Marsh from Decatur.

Special teams also got a boost in this 2018 class with the addition of former Australian Rules Football player Arryn Siposs. The 25-year-old expects to be the starting punter from the moment he arrives on campus. Auburn coach Gus Malzahn says he watched two Australian Rules Football games on television and trusted the recommendation of ProKick Australia — which has produced multiple Ray Guy Award winners and finalists. "You can tell whether he's a competitor, [and] he's a great athlete," Malzahn says. "He can kick it with his right foot, left foot and give us a lot of flexibility with our punt team. "

What Auburn's class didn't do is answer key depth concerns at offensive tackle and tight end. Those will no doubt be addressed in next year's haul.

BY POSITION	
Wide Receivers	4
Defensive Linemen	4
Linebackers	4
Running Backs	3
Defensive Backs	3
Athletes	3
Offensive Linemen	2
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Alabama	9
Georgia	8
Florida	6
Australia	1

Recruit Spotlight

Quindarious "Smoke" Monday

DB • Atlanta, GA

When you arrive on campus as an early enrollee in the spring already sporting a nickname, you better be an impact player, and that is what Auburn coaches are hoping Quindarious "Smoke" Monday will be. With two starting safeties graduating, it's not out of the realm of possibility to believe Monday will get significant playing time at either safety or nickel cornerback in his first season of college football.

When junior-to-be Jeremiah Dinson hurt his shoulder in the A-Day spring scrimmage in April, Monday was called upon to finish the action with the first-team defensive unit. It was a clear sign that defensive coordinator Kevin Steele believes the Atlanta native is ready to play right away.

In his first spring scrimmage, the 6'3", 190-pound athlete was already impressing veteran teammates with his nose for the football and ability to understand the defense.

"Smoke is a long, long player who has got long arms and got good speed," Dinson says. "That's what we need. We need someone to step up this year and play right away."

Monday picked Auburn in part because he knew there would be an opportunity to make an immediate impact.

"I'm going to come in and grind because it's still a big job that I have to earn and not be given it just because they're leaving," Monday said in December. "I got to fill their shoes. I mean, they did a great job this year, so the way I figure, I just got to come next year and do way better than they did."

How did the Atlanta native get his nickname? Simple. "It came from my granddad," Monday says. "I used to just run fast around the house, so he started calling me Smoke."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Kolbin Fuqua	ATH	6-1/210	Cordova, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	819
Joey Gatewood	ATH	6-5/230	Jacksonville, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	49
Michael Harris	ILB	6-2/213	Tucker, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	281
Matthew Hill	WR	6-2/185	Snellville, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	92
Jalil Irvin	OG	6-3/300	Stone Mountain, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	483
Shedrick Jackson	WR	6-2/195	Hoover, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	392
Richard Jibunor	LB	6-3/206	Athens, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	309
Caleb Johnson	DE	6-3/260	Columbus. GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	580
Harold Joiner	RB	6-3/218	Birmingham, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	152
Josh Marsh	OLB	6-2/215	Decatur, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,207
Asa Martin	RB	6-0/205	Decatur, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	202
Zakoby McClain	OLB	6-0/205	Valdosta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	197
Roger McCreary	CB	5-11/178	Mobile, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	993
Coynis Miller	DT	6-2/300	Birmingham, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	120
Smoke Monday	ATH	6-3/190	Atlanta, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	158
Daquan Newkirk	DT	6-3/280	Orlando, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	14*
Kayode Oladele	DE	6-5/250	Hialeah, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	310
Anthony Schwartz	WR	6-0/180	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	163
Jamien Sherwood	S	6-2/200	Jensen Beach, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	257
Shaun Shivers	RB	5-7/175	Hollywood, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	344
Arryn Siposs	P	6-2/200	Melbourne, Australia	★★★	★★★	★★	1,891
Kameron Stutts	OT	6-4/330	Killen, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	584
Christian Tutt	CB	5-11/195	Thomson, GA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	276
Seth Williams	WR	6-3/215	Cottondale, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	185

*junior college transfer

LSU TIGERS

National Forecast: 26 /// SEC West Prediction: 5

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Miami #
Sept. 8	SE Louisiana
Sept. 15	at Auburn
Sept. 22	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 29	Ole Miss
Oct. 6	at Florida
Oct. 13	Georgia
Oct. 20	Mississippi State
Nov. 3	Alabama
Nov. 10	at Arkansas
Nov. 17	Rice
Nov. 24	at Texas A&M

#Arlington, TX

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 7-5, 4-4 SEC

LSU enters 2018 in unfamiliar territory. The Tigers, usually a staple in the preseason top 25, head into the summer with lower-than-usual expectations — at least externally. The question marks start once again on offense. New play caller Steve Ensminger has promised to improve the passing attack but will have a first-year starter at quarterback and an unproven receiving corps. The uncertainty extends to the ground game, as LSU looks for more consistency up front and must identify a new running back after Derrius Guice left for the NFL. The defense returns only five starters, but enough talent returns to rank among the best in the SEC once again. A challenging schedule provides few breaks, including road tests at Texas A&M and Auburn, an opener against Miami and crossover games with Georgia and Florida.

Postseason: Texas Bowl vs. TCU

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Ed Orgeron

RECORD AT SCHOOL
15-6 (1+ year)

CAREER RECORD
31-33 (4+ years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Steve Ensminger

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Dave Aranda

LOCATION
Baton Rouge, LA

STADIUM
Tiger Stadium (102,321)

If you piled up the question marks about this 2018 LSU football team, they would form a rickety stack as high as the double-standard goalposts at either end of Tiger Stadium.

Who will be the quarterback? What will the offense look like? Who will run the ball? Who will be the cornerbacks? Who, if anyone, can kick the ball consistently through Tiger Stadium's aforementioned uprights?



GREEDY WILLIAMS

As Ed Orgeron enters his second full season as head coach after taking over for the fired Les Miles in September 2016, this is pretty much Orgeron's team now. The Tigers have only three remaining players — wide receiver Dee Anderson, tight end Foster Moreau and safety Ed Paris — who started under Miles in 2016.

Though LSU has been to back-to-back Citrus Bowls — the SEC's top non-CFP bowl — under Orgeron, a faction of LSU fans wonders if the head coach is capable of leading a championship-contending program.

"They want to win a championship every year," Orgeron says. "I understand that. That doesn't bother me at all. When you do well, everybody's fired up. When you do bad, everybody's [upset]. I know that. I know what we're doing on a daily basis. I know we're building a championship program, and I know they're finally going to be happy when we win a championship. Up until then, we've got a challenge.

"I know next year is critical for us."

QUARTERBACKS It appeared significant change was at hand entering the 2017 season, when Orgeron made Matt Canada his offensive coordinator. But Orgeron and Canada clashed personally — and Orgeron found Canada's misdirection and shifts intolerable. He sent Canada packing after LSU's Citrus Bowl loss to Notre Dame (Canada is now calling plays at Maryland) and re-promoted the man who ran his offense when Orgeron was interim coach in 2016 — former LSU quarterback and tight ends coach Steve Ensminger. Orgeron and Ensminger are likely to be on the same page. Orgeron has made plain his desire to run the kind of offense USC employed when he was an assistant under Pete Carroll — a pro-style attack with play-action pass principles. Ensminger is prepared to give it to him. In fact, the Tigers may be poised to do something they haven't done in a long, long time: Use the pass to set up the run. "It's more of a pass-type thing," defensive end Andre Anthony said during spring practice. "They're passing the ball. Coming out [in] more of a four-receiver type thing. Everything is not run and pounding. We're opening up more of the pass, getting more people involved." Who will do the passing remains one of those unsettling questions. Sophomore Myles Brennan was expected to take firm hold of the job vacated by Danny Etling. But as the spring progressed, there was little separation between Brennan, redshirt freshman Lowell Narcisse and junior Justin McMillan. Brennan, with his strong and accurate arm and good decision-making skills, still appears to be the man to beat. But it's worth remembering that two years ago, Brandon Harris was the season-opening starter and was yanked in favor of Etling in Week 2.

White: Tom DiPace; Williams: Gus Stark/LSU Athletics

RUNNING BACKS Two years ago, the Tigers had NFL-caliber stars Leonard Fournette and Derrius Guice in the same backfield. Now, for the first time since at least 1974, LSU enters a season in which none of its returning running backs has scored a touchdown. Still, someone has to carry the ball, and those someones are most likely to be Baton Rouge natives Nick Brossette and Clyde Edwards-Helaire. Brossette (46 career carries for 306 yards) is the only LSU back with more than 31 career yards. Four-star signee Chris Curry is also sure to get a chance to prove himself. Edwards-Helaire says LSU's running backs are ready to prove the doubters wrong. "Now," he says, "it's time to show the country."

RECEIVERS Giles. Jonathan Giles. Remember the name. Whoever plays quarterback will surely spend a lot of time throwing to the junior transfer, who had 69 catches for 1,158 yards and 13 TDs in 2016 at Texas Tech. Giles garnered so much respect so quickly he was awarded the No. 7 jersey, previously worn by such LSU greats as Fournette, Tyrann Mathieu and Bert Jones. "I'm going to go out and show everybody why I'm wearing No. 7," Giles says confidently. Even if Giles lives up to the hype, the Tigers will need more receivers to populate Ensminger's three- and four-receiver sets. Players such as Derrick Dillon, Stephen Sullivan and Justin Jefferson (younger brother of former Tigers Jordan and Ricky) should see extensive playing time. And don't forget highly touted freshmen Terrace Marshall and JaMarr Chase. Moreau is LSU's top returning pass catcher with 24. Adding to that tight end mix is Randy Moss' son Thaddeus, who is ready to vie for playing time after sitting out following a transfer from NC State. In August, the younger Moss will introduce his famous father when he is enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The left side of LSU's line is a haven of experience and relative stability with the return of tackle Saahdiq Charles and guard Garrett Brumfield. The fight to replace early NFL entry Will Clapp at center may well last into fall camp between sophomore Lloyd Cushenberry and freshman Cole Smith. Sophomore Ed Ingram is back at right guard, but right tackle features another spicy position duel between junior college transfer Badara Traore and sophomore Austin Deculus. James Cregg, formerly with the Los Angeles Chargers, takes over as offensive line coach in place of Jeff Grimes, now offensive coordinator at BYU.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN To keep defensive coordinator Dave Aranda away from deep-pocketed Texas A&M, LSU threw some serious cash his way: $10 million guaranteed over four years. In return for that investment, LSU is expected to get the benefit of Aranda's defensive scheme in full bloom for the first time in his three years at



LB DEVIN WHITE

LSU 5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY TIGERS

DEVIN WHITE, LB An All-America-caliber anchor and front-seven building block. He had at least 11 tackles in eight of the Tigers' 13 games.

SAAHDIQ CHARLES, LT On an offense riddled with numerous key departures, having Charles and left guard Garrett Brumfield back to anchor that side of the line is a huge plus.

GREEDY WILLIAMS, CB With his talent and the lack of cornerback depth, the most important job may belong to the training staff in keeping him healthy.

RASHARD LAWRENCE, DE He could combine with transfer Breiden Fehoko for quite a formidable duo if Fehoko is as good as advertised.

K'LAVON CHAISSON, BUCK LSU needs Chaisson to shine as its designated pass rusher.

KEY LOSSES

DERRIUS GUICE, RB It has been a long time since LSU had no proven running backs on the roster. The Tigers have no one of Guice's caliber.

DANNY ETLING, QB For all the talk of Etling's physical limitations, there will surely be times the Tigers miss his tough, steady experience.

WILL CLAPP, C The early departure of the affable, versatile Clapp leaves a void LSU will be hard-pressed to fill.

DJ CHARK, WR Chark's 40 catches and 874 receiving yards were 16 and 543 more, respectively, than any other player on the roster.

CHRISTIAN LACOUTURE, DE Talking him into a fifth year in 2017 was better than signing a blue-chip recruit.

RISING STAR

With DJ Chark and Russell Gage gone, **JONATHAN GILES** needs to be a star for an LSU receiver corps short on productive returning hands. The Missouri City, Texas, native had more than 1,100 receiving yards at Texas Tech in 2016 — run of the mill for the Red Raiders. Do that at LSU, and the locals might make a statue of Giles.

LSU. "[We want to] let Dave run his total package," Orgeron says. "He's been limited in some of the things he's done. I think you're going to see a Dave Aranda package that's going to be fantastic. Dave can be very multiple and very creative. We were very basic his first two years here. He wanted to get the fundamentals down." Aranda often joked last year that LSU had the best ineligible defensive line in the country with Texas Tech transfer Breiden Fehoko at end and Tyler Shelvin (academics) at tackle. Now they're full go, with Fehoko expected to fill the slot vacated by Christian LaCouture and Shelvin at the least playing an active backup role to fellow nose tackle Ed Alexander. Junior Rashard Lawrence, a considerable talent himself, returns at the other end spot. How good can LSU's defensive front be this season? "I don't want to brag," Fehoko said after one spring scrimmage, "but the offense really didn't score. We've got a whole lot of fronts in, a whole lot of blitzes."



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)				
WR	7	Jonathan Giles (Jr.)	17	Racey McMath (So.)
WR	32	Justin Jefferson (So.)	19	Derrick Dillon (Jr.)
WR	10	**Stephen Sullivan (Jr.)**	6	Terrace Marshall (Fr.)
LT	77	**Saahdiq Charles (So.)**	65	Jakori Savage (So.)
LG	78	**Garrett Brumfield (Sr.)**	68	Damien Lewis (Jr.)
C	79	Lloyd Cushenberry (So.)	67	Cole Smith (Fr.)
RG	70	**Ed Ingram (So.)**	68	Damien Lewis (Jr.)
RT	74	Badara Traore (Jr.)	76	Austin Deculus (So.)
TE	84	**Foster Moreau (Sr.)**	81	Thaddeus Moss (So.)
QB	15	Myles Brennan (So.)	2	Lowell Narcisse (Fr.)
RB	4	Nick Brossette (Sr.)	22	Clyde Edwards-Helaire (So.)
DEFENSE (5)				
DE	91	Breiden Fehoko (Jr.)	92	Neil Farrell (So.)
NT	99	Ed Alexander (Jr.)	72	Tyler Shelvin (Fr.)
DE	90	**Rashard Lawrence (Jr.)**	97	Glen Logan (So.)
BUCK	4	K'Lavon Chaisson (So.)	49	Travez Moore (Jr.)
OLB	40	**Devin White (Jr.)**	8	Patrick Queen (So.)
ILB	6	Jacob Phillips (So.)	24	Tyler Taylor (So.)
OLB	45	Michael Divinity (Jr.)	43	Ray Thornton (So.)
CB	29	**Greedy Williams (So.)**		Kelvin Joseph (Fr.)
CB	13	Jontre Kirklin (So.)	11	Terrence Alexander (Sr.)
S	26	**John Battle (Sr.)**	30	Eric Monroe (So.)
S	9	**Grant Delpit (So.)**	3	JaCoby Stevens (So.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K		Cole Tracy (Sr.)	**KR**	22 C. Edwards-Helaire (So.)
P	46	Zach Von Rosenberg (So.)	**PR**	7 Jonathan Giles (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

LINEBACKERS While LSU will miss Arden Key at the Buck position (technically a linebacker), having Devin White back calms a lot of worries. White led the SEC with 10.2 tackles per game last season and could well be LSU's next All-America linebacker. K'Lavon Chaisson, who started three games at Buck in Key's absence, also returns. Junior Michael Divinity likely will take over the outside linebacker spot opposite Chaisson, but the fight to man the inside spot next to White between sophomores Jacob Phillips and Tyler Taylor won't be settled until the fall.

DEFENSIVE BACKS LSU has one of the nation's best shutdown cornerbacks in sophomore Greedy Williams, but opponents are sure to pick on whoever is playing opposite him. Sophomore Jontre Kirklin was vying to start in the spring, but freshman Kelvin Joseph (a converted safety) could win out once he arrives in August. Terrence Alexander, a grad transfer from Stanford, appears destined for a backup role. At safety, the Tigers have a good mix of experience with senior John Battle and sophomore Grant Delpit returning.

SPECIALISTS There is little surprise Orgeron used his new 10th assistant slot to make former analyst Greg McMahon his special teams coordinator after Connor Culp and Jack Gonsoulin combined to make just 16-of-27 field goal attempts in 2017. Orgeron also used one of his precious available scholarships to sign Cole Tracy, a transfer from Assumption College in Massachusetts who connected on 27-of-29 attempts in 2017. The Tigers are expected to continue to use Zach Von Rosenberg for regular punts and Josh Growden for shorter distances. Giles has the inside track to return punts, while Edwards-Helaire is set to be LSU's top kickoff return specialist.

Saahdiq: AP; Moreau: Tom DiPace

2018 LSU ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
15 Brennan, Myles	6-4/193	So.	Long Beach, MS
12 McMillan, Justin	6-3/215	Jr.	Cedar Hill, TX
2 Narcisse, Lowell	6-2/231	Fr.	St. James, LA
13 Sale, Andre	6-1/197	So.	Little Rock, AR

RUNNING BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
43 Brock, Matt	6-1/230	Jr.	Chattanooga, TN
4 Brossette, Nick	6-0/218	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
44 Carter, Tory	6-1/258	So.	Leesburg, GA
41 Ducre, David	6-0/236	Sr.	Slidell, LA
22 Edwards-Helaire, Clyde	5-8/208	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
27 Fournette, Lanard	5-10/201	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
47 Gallman, Trey	6-2/262	Sr.	Prairieville, LA
25 Provens, Tae	6-0/187	Fr.	Gurley, AL
48 Smith, Carlton	6-3/226	Fr.	Houston, TX

RECEIVERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
11 Anderson, Dee	6-6/223	Jr.	DeSoto, TX
87 Beckwith, Justin	6-2/197	So.	Jackson, LA
24 Brunet, Colby	5-11/176	So.	Metairie, LA
14 Davis, Drake	6-4/218	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
19 Dillon, Derrick	5-11/178	Jr.	Franklinton, LA
38 Fulton, Keith	5-10/186	So.	Metairie, LA
7 Giles, Jonathan	6-0/193	Jr.	Missouri City, TX
32 Jefferson, Justin	6-2/185	So.	Destrehan, LA
31 Jones, Justin	5-8/181	So.	Dallas, TX
26 Lewis, Adam	5-11/176	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
6 Marshall Jr., Terrace	6-3/195	Fr.	Bossier City, LA
35 McKoy, Wesley	5-11/193	Jr.	Englewood Cliffs, NJ
17 McMath, Racey	6-3/215	So.	New Orleans, LA
89 Moore, Derian	5-11/189	Sr.	Leesville, LA
30 Ostrom, Michael	6-0/184	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
16 Scheyd, Tiger	6-1/190	Sr.	Miramar Beach, FL
10 Sullivan, Stephen	6-6/235	Jr.	Donaldsonville, LA

TIGHT ENDS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
42 Moffitt, Aaron	6-2/266	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
84 Moreau, Foster	6-6/255	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
81 Moss, Thaddeus	6-3/247	So.	Charleston, WV
80 Pettigrew, Jamal	6-7/262	So.	New Orleans, LA
34 Sheffer, Zach	6-3/230	Fr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
88 Washington, Jacory	6-6/248	Sr.	Westlake, LA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
78 Brumfield, Garrett	6-3/299	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
71 Campbell, Donavaughn	6-4/343	So.	Ponchatoula, LA
77 Charles, Saahdiq	6-5/321	So.	Jackson, MS
79 Cushenberry III, Lloyd	6-4/316	So.	Geismar, LA
76 Deculus, Austin	6-6/324	So.	Cypress, TX
70 Ingram, Ed	6-4/314	So.	DeSoto, TX
68 Lewis, Damien	6-3/326	Jr.	Canton, MS
54 Luke, Rory	6-4/273	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
73 Magee, Adrian	6-5/323	Jr.	Franklinton, LA
62 Mikush, Justin	6-4/285	Sr.	Tomball, TX
65 Savage, Jakori	6-5/317	So.	Bay Minette, AL
69 Simmers, Turner	6-5/295	Sr.	Prairieville, LA
67 Smith, Cole	6-4/275	Fr.	Pontotoc, MS
75 Smith, Michael	6-2/290	So.	Kileen, TX
74 Traore, Badara	6-6/310	Jr.	Hyde Park, MA

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
85 Abdul-Aziz, Jamil	6-2/306	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
99 Alexander, Ed	6-3/339	Jr.	Hammond, LA
54 Cotton, Davin	6-1/262	Fr.	Shreveport, LA
92 Farrell Jr., Neil	6-4/287	So.	Mobile, AL
91 Fehoko, Breiden	6-3/298	Jr.	Honolulu, HI
90 Lawrence, Rashard	6-3/300	Jr.	Monroe, LA
97 Logan, Glen	6-4/315	So.	Destrehan, LA
49 Moore, Travez	6-4/250	Jr.	Bastrop, LA
59 Newsome, Seth	6-1/262	So.	Fredericksburg, VA
72 Shelvin, Tyler	6-3/378	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
93 Thomas, Justin	6-4/277	So.	Spanish Fort, AL

LINEBACKERS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
46 Anthony, Andre	6-5/242	So.	New Orleans, LA
23 Baskerville, Micah	6-2/215	Fr.	Shreveport, LA
4 Chaisson, K'Lavon	6-4/240	So.	Houston, TX
45 Divinity Jr., Michael	6-2/239	Jr.	Marrero, LA
55 Hall, Kody	6-1/239	Jr.	Nacogdoches, TX
6 Phillips, Jacob	6-3/237	So.	Nashville, TN
8 Queen, Patrick	6-1/220	So.	Livonia, LA
58 Small, Jared	5-11/199	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
24 Taylor, Tyler	6-2/238	So.	Buford, GA
43 Thornton, Ray	6-3/228	So.	Killeen, TX
40 White, Devin	6-1/240	Jr.	Springhill, LA

DEFENSIVE BACKS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
11 Alexander, Terrence	5-10/178	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
26 Battle, John	6-3/201	Sr.	Hallandale, FL
41 Brown, Caleb	6-1/202	So.	Stonewall, LA
9 Delpit, Grant	6-3/201	So.	Houston, TX
22 Fulton, Kristian	6-1/195	Jr.	Metairie, LA
33 Harris Jr., Todd	6-0/186	So.	Plaquemine, LA
27 Kately, Treven	5-10/184	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
13 Kirklin, Jontre	6-0/173	So.	Lutcher, LA
31 Lewis, Cameron	6-2/200	So.	Monroe, LA
30 Monroe, Eric	6-0/197	So.	Houston, TX
28 Netherly, Mannie	6-3/194	So.	Crosby, TX
21 Paris, Ed	6-1/210	Sr.	Arlington, TX
3 Stevens, JaCoby	6-2/216	So.	Murfreesboro, TN
5 Vincent Jr., Kary	5-10/182	So.	Port Arthur, TX
29 Williams, Greedy	6-2/182	So.	Shreveport, LA

SPECIALISTS	HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
61 Carrell, David-Michael (LS)	5-11/254	So.	Bourg, LA
34 Culp, Connor (K)	5-11/196	So.	Phoenix, AZ
50 Ferguson, Blake (LS)	6-4/234	Jr.	Buford, GA
39 Gonsoulin, Jack (K)	5-9/165	Jr.	Baton Rouge, LA
38 Growden, Josh (P)	6-2/204	Jr.	Sydney, Australia
94 McQuen, Brandon (K)	6-4/211	Fr.	Madisonville, LA
Tracy, Cole (K)	6-0/185	Sr.	Camarillo, CA
46 Von Rosenberg, Zach (P)	6-5/250	So.	Lake Charles, LA

SCOUTING THE TIGERS

Opposing Coaches Size up LSU

"I like Ed (Orgeron), I really do. He can win there, and maybe he can develop into a guy that stays there a while. But he has to let his coaches coach. What he did with (former offensive coordinator) Matt Canada was ridiculous. You paid him all that money to get on board, and then a couple weeks into the season, you're bailing on him. I don't know all the specifics and if Canada wasn't a good fit with the rest of the staff, but I know what Canada has accomplished in this game. He knows what he's doing. If you're an LSU fan, your hope is Ed does, too — and that his new OC will fit. ... The quarterback has been a problem there since Les (Miles) first started out. They haven't been able to figure it out for years. The one season with (Zach) Mettenberger has really been the only time they've been able to pressure defenses with the passing game since they won it all. To me it doesn't matter who the guy is — I'm guessing it's (Myles) Brennan — because whoever is playing quarterback will have new guys all around him. If a rebuilt line isn't a big enough question, who are they going to throw to, and who's going to run with power like they always have to keep pressure of the quarterback? A lot of questions there on offense. And (Steve) Ensminger is your guy to run that show? That hire will define Ed, no question about it. ... I don't know how Dave Aranda hasn't been more of a factor in these Power 5 job searches. His defenses there have been fantastic, better than the groups he put together at Wisconsin — and they were really good. They had a lot of young guys play last year, and they're going to be even better this year."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 6-2 SEC

Sept.	2	vs. BYU #	W	27-0
Sept.	9	Chattanooga	W	45-10
Sept.	16	at Mississippi State	L	7-37
Sept.	23	Syracuse	W	35-26
Sept.	30	Troy	L	21-24
Oct.	7	at Florida	W	17-16
Oct.	14	Auburn	W	27-23
Oct.	21	at Ole Miss	W	40-24
Nov.	4	at Alabama	L	10-24
Nov.	11	Arkansas	W	33-10
Nov.	18	at Tennessee	W	30-10
Nov.	25	Texas A&M	W	45-21
Jan.	1	vs. Notre Dame %	L	17-21

#New Orleans %Citrus Bowl



FOSTER MOREAU

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Danny Etling	275	165	2,463	16	2
Myles Brennan	**24**	**14**	**182**	**1**	**2**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Derrius Guice	237	1,251	5.3	11
Darrel Williams	145	820	5.7	9
Russell Gage	26	232	8.3	1
Danny Etling	72	128	1.8	2

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
DJ Chark	40	874	21.9	3
Foster Moreau	**24**	**278**	**11.6**	**3**
Darrel Williams	23	331	14.4	0
Russell Gage	21	285	13.6	3

KICKING: **Connor Culp, 11-16 FGs, 20-23 PATs, 53 points**

TACKLES: **Devin White, 133**; Christian LaCouture, 66

SACKS: Greg Gilmore, 7.5

INTERCEPTIONS: **Greedy Williams, 6**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.2 ppg	9	76
Rushing	207.6 ypg	5	28
Passing	203.5 ypg	8	84
Total	411.1 ypg	7	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	18.9 ppg	4	14
Rushing	128.4 ypg	3	24
Passing	187.6 ypg	6	21
Total	316.0 ypg	4	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.77	3	16

LSU OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

FOLLOW THE MONEY In March, LSU became the latest program with a $6 million-plus payroll for its assistant coaching staff. The Tigers' coaches make a total of $6.405 million, right behind Ohio State ($7.06 million), Clemson ($6.585 million) and Georgia ($6.42 million). Leading the way is defensive coordinator Dave Aranda, whom LSU kept in Baton Rouge after he was hotly pursued by Texas A&M with a four-year guaranteed contract paying him $2.5 million per season. The contract made Aranda the first $2 million coordinator.

ARANDA'S AUTONOMY LSU brought in Bill Busch to coach safeties, taking some of the load off defensive backs coach Corey Raymond, who will now work mainly with the corners. It was a telling hire, as apparently part of Aranda's new deal was that he be given free rein to add a coach of his choice on defense. Aranda, not Orgeron, was the coach who was quoted in the LSU news release announcing Busch's hiring.

INFRASTRUCTURE There is a saying about the arms race of college athletics: If you aren't building, you're falling behind. Rick Perry, the man who runs the Tiger Athletic Foundation, the fundraising arm of LSU athletics, admits that while there has been much building over the years, there are critical areas where the program has not kept pace. For LSU, catching up involves a $23 million construction project to modernize and expand the football operations center. Improvements will include an enlarged and renovated locker room, coaches offices and training area. Perhaps most important, LSU will be getting a nutrition center, built at what LSU folks refer to as "football ops" but shared by the entire athletic department.

NAME DROPPING While the most eye-catching name to join LSU's program this year belongs to transfer tight end Thaddeus Moss — son of 2018 Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy Moss — there is another player whom LSU fans will know because of his grandfather. Cameron Prudhomme is headed to LSU as a preferred walk-on at tight end. He's the grandson of legendary LSU basketball coach Dale Brown, and the son of Brown's only child, Robyn Brown Prudhomme. Brown coached LSU from 1972-97 and led the Tigers to two Final Fours and four SEC championships.

WHERE'S JACOBY? You can't tell where JaCoby Stevens is without a program. Neither can he. The nation's top-rated safety prospect when he signed with LSU in 2017, Stevens was moved to wide receiver last season, where he caught two passes for 32 yards. Once the season started, he was shifted to F-back, a hybrid blocking/receiving position. Injuries in the secondary finally forced Stevens back to safety for the second half of the season, but he played in only six games (with one offensive start) and never recorded a defensive statistic. After what was basically a waste of his freshman year, Stevens is back at safety. Probably. The roster on LSU's website during spring practice still listed him as a wide receiver.



JOHN BATTLE

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	30.9	33
Defense	26.1	8
Margin	**+4.8**	**14**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	46.1%	15
Defense	38.2%	33
Margin	**+7.9%**	**17**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.2	32
Defense	5.1	28
Margin	**+1.1**	**24**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.1	96
Defense	4.2	43
Margin	**-0.1**	**80**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	10.0	3
Actual	+10	15
Margin	**+0.0**	**72**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

43.2

Despite youth in the secondary, LSU liked to force the issue against the pass. Of opponents' 176 incompletions in 2017, LSU defensed (intercepted or broke up) 76 of them, a ratio of 43.2 percent. Only Wisconsin, Iowa and Rutgers had a higher PD-to-INC ratio, and freshmen were responsible for 34 of those 76 PDs.

54.1

LSU remains the most physical team in a physical conference. Only 54.1 percent of opponent tackles against the Tigers' offense were solo tackles — the lowest rate in not only the SEC, but the entire country. The national average was more than 20 percentage points higher at 74.2 percent.

1,000

In the 2000s, LSU has had a 1,000-yard rusher in six of eight seasons, and one of the times the Tigers didn't (2011), they had two 700-yard rushers instead. Over the last three years, their leading rusher — Leonard Fournette once, Derrius Guice twice — has averaged 1,530 yards. That's a high bar for an offense whose leading returning rusher, Nick Brossette, had 19 carries last year.

+7

With expectations off after a shaky 3–2 start, LSU quietly began overachieving. The Tigers beat the spread in each of the season's final seven games, winning six outright and outpacing their Vegas line by more than seven points per game. A big reason for this: turnovers. Their turnover margin was plus-1 in the first five games and plus-7 in the next seven.

Tom DiPace

2018 SIGNEES

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	7
Wide Receivers	4
Offensive Linemen	4
Linebackers	2
Athletes	2
Running Backs	1
Tight Ends	1
Defensive Backs	1
BY STATE	
Louisiana	13
Texas	3
Florida	2
Mississippi	2
Alabama	1
Massachusetts	1

The first class of the double signing date recruiting cycle was a double-edged sword for LSU — crowned by one cutting remark from a big recruit who got away.

LSU addressed many of its critical needs along the offensive and defensive lines. The Tigers loaded up with 11 total signees in the trenches — seven on defense, four on offense — and didn't merely settle for warm bodies. LSU landed highly regarded four stars such as defensive end Jarell Cherry and defensive tackle Chasen Hines. The Tigers also pulled in two of the nation's top junior college prospects — defensive end/pass rusher Travez Moore and tackle Badara Traore — hoping for some immediate impact. Traore could wind up as a starter at right tackle right away. And LSU enjoyed perhaps surprising success by landing Louisiana's two top wide receiver prospects, Terrace Marshall and JaMarr Chase. Marshall, from Bossier City, is the only 247Sports Composite five-star in the Tigers' class. Chase, from Metairie, is the third-highest ranked player in the class.

In some other critical areas, however, the Tigers failed to add the type of talent they will need to contend in the SEC West.

Despite the loss of 2017 starters Donte Jackson and Kevin Toliver, LSU failed to sign even one true cornerback. The Tigers shoved their chips to the center of the table on five-star cornerback Patrick Surtain Jr., a long-time lean to LSU, only to see him sign with archrival Alabama. Surtain rubbed salt in the open wound, saying of Alabama: "They win championships, and I want to be a part of that."

The Tigers also did not sign a quarterback. LSU signed two in 2017 — Myles Brennan and Lowell Narcisse. But with one of those two, or Justin McMillan, expected to leave should he not win the starting job or at least a significant playing role, the Tigers could find themselves with only two scholarship quarterbacks heading into the season.

Despite the fact LSU finished outside the consensus top-10 recruiting rankings for the first time since 2012, it was an adequate class, hardly a disaster.

Recruit Spotlight

Kelvin Joseph

DB • Baton Rouge, LA

Kelvin Joseph and Ja'Vonte Smart aren't a package deal. But two of the biggest stars Baton Rouge high school sports has turned out in recent years are both headed to LSU, looking to lift up football and men's basketball in critical areas.

Joseph is a four-star safety prospect ranked fifth in the country at his position, the first football player from Scotlandville High School to ever sign with the Tigers. Smart, a four-star combo guard also from Scotlandville, is a top-30 national recruit in basketball. The two are good friends, virtually inseparable off the field or court.

"When they're not at school, you see one and you see the other," says Latoria Stewart, Joseph's mother. "They stick together like glue."

Joseph will likely be pressed into making the transition to cornerback, his talent being so vast and the Tigers' need at that position being so acute. If he performs up to his lofty expectations, it would not be surprising to see Joseph work his way through fall camp and wind up a starter when LSU opens Sept. 2 against Miami (Fla.) in Arlington, Texas. Joseph recorded 119 tackles as a senior at Scotlandville.

"He plays the game real angry," says LaVanta Davis, his high school coach.

Smart, a cornerstone of coach Will Wade's recruiting class, is also expected to start right away.

Joseph says he and Smart saw more than opportunity in their respective sports, but a responsibility as they take their considerable talents to the collegiate level.

"All of our blood, sweat and tears happened in Baton Rouge," he says. "Everybody did so much for us. It's time to give back."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Micah Baskerville	ILB	6-2/215	Shreveport, LA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	277
JaMarr Chase	WR	6-1/195	Metairie, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	84
Jarell Cherry	DE	6-3/225	Dallas, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	198
Damone Clark	ILB	6-3/225	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	357
Davin Cotton	DT	6-1/262	Shreveport, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	284
Chris Curry	RB	5-11/200	Lehigh Acres, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	355
Chasen Hines	DT	6-3/335	Marshall, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	243
Jaray Jenkins	WR	6-1/180	Jena, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	449
Nelson Jenkins	DT	6-3/290	Plaquemine, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	521
Kenan Jones	WR	6-3/200	Berwick, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	327
Kelvin Joseph	S	6-1/191	Baton Rouge, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	42
Damien Lewis	OG	6-3/320	Canton, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	59*
Dominic Livingston	DT	6-3/350	Houston, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	529
Terrace Marshall	WR	6-3/200	Bossier City, LA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	13
Travez Moore	DE	6-3/250	Bastrop, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	4*
Tae Provens	ATH	5-11/190	Gurley, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	772
Dare Rosenthal	DT	6-7/331	Ferriday, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	305
Dantrieze Scott	ATH	6-5/245	Ferriday, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	800
Zach Sheffer	TE	6-3/235	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	634
Cole Smith	C	6-4/280	Pontotoc, MS	★★★	★★★★	★★★	434
Badara Traore	OT	6-6/310	Boston, MA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	6*
Cameron Wire	OT	6-6/280	Gonzales, LA	★★★	★★★★	★★★	429

*junior college transfer

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

National Forecast: 14 /// SEC West Prediction: 3

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Stephen F. Austin
Sept. 8	at Kansas State
Sept. 15	UL Lafayette
Sept. 22	at Kentucky
Sept. 29	Florida
Oct. 6	Auburn
Oct. 20	at LSU
Oct. 27	Texas A&M
Nov. 3	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 10	at Alabama
Nov. 17	Arkansas
Nov. 22	at Ole Miss

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 9-3, 5-3 SEC

Joe Moorhead is stepping into one of the best situations of any first-year coach, inheriting 16 returning starters from a team that went 9–4. Moorhead's first priority is to design an offense around dynamic QB Nick Fitzgerald. The senior ranked third in the SEC in total offense last season and will be fully recovered from an ankle injury suffered in the Egg Bowl. Running back Aeris Williams returns after eclipsing 1,000 yards in 2017, while the offensive line ranks among the best in the SEC. With a strong front seven, the defense is poised to pick up where it left off last fall, as this unit limited offenses to 20.9 points per game. With home games against Florida, Auburn and Texas A&M, Mississippi State could flirt with the 10-win mark in Moorhead's debut.
Postseason: Citrus Bowl vs. Michigan State

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Joe Moorhead
RECORD AT SCHOOL
First Season
CAREER RECORD
38-13 (4 years)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Luke Getsy
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Bob Shoop
LOCATION
Starkville, MS
STADIUM
Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field (61,337)

Dan Mullen did incredible work at Mississippi State — in his nine years in Starkville, he won 69 games, took MSU to eight bowl games and developed some of the best players in the school's history.

But it was time for something else, for him and for Mississippi State. So Mullen left for Florida days after losing the Egg Bowl to Ole Miss, and athletic director John Cohen hired Joe Moorhead.



MONTEZ SWEAT

It's a bold play for Cohen: In a conference that often operates by trying to emulate Alabama and Nick Saban, Cohen instead hired a Penn State offensive coordinator whose head-coaching experience is at FCS Fordham and who has never worked in the South.

But like Mullen, Moorhead is hailed as an offensive dynamo who, in particular, gets the most out of his quarterbacks. And like Mullen when he arrived in Starkville, Moorhead is not content to sit back and accept the widely-held notion that you can't win big at Mississippi State.

"Our goal here is not to just maintain this program," Moorhead says. "It's not to insult these guys or this school or this state with low expectations. We're going to do everything we can to bring an SEC championship home and be a program that competes for a national championship on a yearly basis."

"He's not here to maintain," Cohen explains. "He's here to make us better."

It bolsters Moorhead's championship vision that he steps into a program that is set up for immediate success. MSU loses only six starters from 2017, and only a couple would qualify as impact losses. And with a returning two-year starter at quarterback and a top-notch defensive line intact, fans are hoping that it's a special season in Year 1 for Moorhead.

QUARTERBACKS We may finally find out this fall what Nick Fitzgerald's ceiling is, and what capability he has to move on to the NFL after his senior season. In his second season as MSU's starting quarterback, it's fair to say that while Fitzgerald's development didn't stagnate, he did not progress as rapidly as hoped. That may not entirely be his fault — if you do not have receivers (more on that soon), it's hard to show off your arm strength. But Fitzgerald threw the ball 30 or more times in a game only twice, completed 55.6 percent of his passes (an improvement of 1.3 percentage points over his first year) and had 15 touchdowns to 11 interceptions. He was still a run-first quarterback, ending up with 984 yards in 11 games (he was hurt early in the Egg Bowl and missed the TaxSlayer Bowl after ankle surgery). Moorhead will play to Fitzgerald's strengths, and it would be foolish to keep the mobile QB in the pocket. But Fitzgerald is also probably capable of throwing downfield more than he has, and while he was limited in the spring, he was seen throwing the football vertically. That's a promising sign, and Fitzgerald is saying all the right things about an offense that will look to make more big plays instead of favoring methodical drives.

Fitzgerald: AP; Sweat: Tom DiPace

RUNNING BACKS A major difference between Mullen's and Moorhead's offenses is the use of the running back as a receiver: Penn State's Saquon Barkley became a Heisman finalist after catching 54 passes last season, while MSU's backs caught a combined 23 in 2017. So it'll be fascinating to see how the Bulldogs backs develop as weapons, and if that opens up an opportunity for someone further down the depth chart if he can prove to have reliable hands. As is, Aeris Williams is a 1,000-yard back who is a tough, reliable runner. His top backup is probably sophomore Kylin Hill, who is more of a game changer with explosive burst.

RECEIVERS To say that Mississippi State's receivers struggled in 2017 would be an understatement. One of the expected starters, Malik Dear, missed the entire year with a torn ACL. Donald Gray was supposed to be the No. 1 receiver but struggled to make that leap and missed the final five games with an injury. It ended up being a motley collection of less-than-ready players and journeymen, and the result was that no one caught more than 27 passes — which is why it's so important that Moorhead was able to keep the commitments from the top junior college receiver, Stephen Guidry, and the top Mississippi high school receiver, Malik Heath, and add a commitment from Devonta Jason. It's not out of the question that those three newcomers will combine with a healthy Dear, Keith Mixon and tight end Farrod Green to form Fitzgerald's target group. That means relying on three first-year SEC players, including two freshmen. But after last season it couldn't be any worse.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Left tackle Martinas Rankin was an All-SEC player last season, and Mississippi State will certainly miss him. But the good news is that he's the only O-line starter who's not returning. Guards Darryl Williams and Deion Calhoun really emerged as strong building blocks a year ago, and center Elgton Jenkins was solid in that role after moving from tackle last offseason. Stewart Reese, now a third-year sophomore, slid into the right tackle job and started every game in 2017, and his classmate, Greg Eiland, is expected to do the same at left tackle. The strength of this line is definitely in the interior, but the tackles are young enough to believe they'll get there.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN No other position group at Mississippi State has as much top-end talent and depth as the defensive line. It starts with junior Jeffery Simmons, who profiles as a high NFL Draft pick if he chooses to leave after 2018. For now, it's hard to beat a guy who as a sophomore had 60 tackles (12 for a loss), five sacks, forced two fumbles, blocked three punts/kicks and scored a couple of touchdowns. He can line up as an end or tackle in defensive coordinator Bob Shoop's 4-3 base defense. Montez Sweat



QB NICK FITZGERALD

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY BULLDOGS

NICK FITZGERALD, QB Now a three-year starter, the dynamic running threat is an improving passer and is returning from offseason ankle surgery.

JEFFERY SIMMONS, DL Capable of playing both end and tackle in a 4-3 scheme, Simmons is one of the best players in the SEC.

AERIS WILLIAMS, RB Followed up breakout sophomore season by running for 1,107 yards as a junior. Next step: Showing the NFL he can catch passes.

MONTEZ SWEAT, DE Playing OLB in a 3-4 scheme, Sweat led Mississippi State with 10.5 sacks and 15.5 tackles for a loss. He moves to end this year.

DARRYL WILLIAMS, LG Came into his own as a first-year starter; named SEC Offensive Lineman of the Week after the Bulldogs' win over LSU.

KEY LOSSES

MARTINAS RANKIN, OT A 2017 All-SEC player who won the Kent Hull Trophy as Mississippi's top offensive lineman.

TOLANDO CLEVELAND, CB Had 18 tackles and broke up three passes as a senior; started 22 games in his career.

DONALD GRAY, WR Injuries wrecked the end of his senior year, but Gray scored 10 TDs in three seasons at MSU.

DEZ HARRIS, LB A steadying presence on the defense, Harris emerged as a senior with 56 tackles, a couple of sacks and three quarterback hurries.

LOGAN COOKE, P Had a 42.7-yard average and also handled kickoff duties, with 58.9 percent of his kicks going for touchbacks.

RISING STAR

For a program that desperately needs a No. 1 wide receiver, **STEPHEN GUIDRY** was a huge addition. The Louisiana prep product went to Hinds (Miss.) Community College, signed with Mississippi State in December and enrolled the next month. He's 6'4", 190 pounds and was ranked as the No. 1 junior college receiver in the country.

led MSU with 10.5 sacks in his first year on campus, and the former junior college signee is back to pair with Simmons. Braxton Hoyett and Cory Thomas are not big stat guys, but they're big defensive tackles who flash on film as players who move the line of scrimmage in a positive way for Mississippi State. It's essential for any defense to rotate its linemen, and MSU is no different; when it does, it'll look to Gerri Green, Chauncey Rivers and Kobe Jones, among others.

LINEBACKERS This is probably the position that is most changed by Shoop's switch from Todd Grantham's 3-4 to a 4-3 (when MSU is not in a nickel defense, at least). A lot of the former outside linebackers (Sweat and Green included) have moved to end, and linebacker is now largely the domain of a handful of middle linebackers by trade. Erroll Thompson was not a heralded recruit, but he had 46 tackles as a redshirt freshman and probably slides into the middle linebacker job. Willie Gay played as a true freshman and can move to the outside thanks to his athleticism. Then there's Leo Lewis, an asset against run-based offenses who was simply not a part of the game plan at times last year because of issues in pass coverage. Tim Washington is 6'3" and 230 pounds and could play some outside linebacker. There's also redshirt freshman Tyler Dunning, a former four-star prospect.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)					
WR	1	Stephen Guidry (Jr.)	6	Jamal Couch (Jr.)	
WR	3	Devonta Jason (Fr.)	**86**	**Jesse Jackson (Sr.)**	
WR	**23**	**Keith Mixon (Jr.)**	9	Malik Dear (Jr.)	
LT	55	Greg Eiland (So.)	78	Tyre Phillips (Jr.)	
LG	**73**	**Darryl Williams (Jr.)**	75	Michael Story (Jr.)	
C	**74**	**Elgton Jenkins (Sr.)**	54	Blake Mitchell (So.)	
RG	**61**	**Deion Calhoun (Sr.)**	56	Dareuan Parker (So.)	
RT	**51**	**Stewart Reese (So.)**	70	Tommy Champion (Jr.)	
TE	**82**	**Farrod Green (Jr.)**	81	Justin Johnson (Sr.)	
QB	**7**	**Nick Fitzgerald (Sr.)**	10	Keytaon Thompson (So.)	
RB	**22**	**Aeris Williams (Sr.)**	8	Kylin Hill (So.)	
DEFENSE (7)					
DE	**4**	**Gerri Green (Sr.)**	52	Kobe Jones (So.)	
DT	**94**	**Jeffery Simmons (Jr.)**	90	Grant Harris (Sr.)	
DT	**95**	**Braxton Hoyett (Sr.)**	34	Cory Thomas (Sr.)	
DE	**9**	**Montez Sweat (Sr.)**	43	Fletcher Adams (Jr.)	
LB	40	Erroll Thompson (So.)	50	Tim Washington (Jr.)	
LB	6	Willie Gay (So.)	**10**	**Leo Lewis (Jr.)**	
NB	32	Brian Cole (Jr.)	8	Maurice Smitherman (Jr.)	
CB	24	Chris Rayford (Sr.)	33	Tyler Williams (Fr.)	
CB	13	Cameron Dantzler (So.)	2	Jamal Peters (Sr.)	
S	**41**	**Mark McLaurin (Sr.)**	29	C.J. Morgan (So.)	
S	**3**	**Johnathan Abram (Sr.)**	7	Marcus Murphy (Fr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	47	Jace Christmann (So.)	KR	2 Reggie Todd (So.)	
P	42	Tucker Day (So.)	PR	4 Deddrick Thomas (Jr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS The strength of this unit is at safety, where Mark McLaurin (team-high 79 tackles, six interceptions as a junior in 2017) and Johnathan Abram (71 stops) return. It's a good mix in the back end with the two: McLaurin is strong in pass coverage, while Abram is a proven big hitter who is capable of walking up into the box. Brian Cole emerged in the spring as the favorite to start at nickel corner. Where the intrigue exists is at cornerback, where 2017 starters Lashard Durr and Tolando Cleveland are both gone. Chris Rayford has probably played his way into one job after working himself into the rotation a year ago. Jamal Peters was once a top recruit who gets another chance to lock down a starting job. And there's a mix of younger guys, including Cameron Dantzler, aiming for playing time.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker has long been a problem for Mississippi State, but Jace Christmann went from barely known to a fan favorite in 2017 after making 12-of-14 field goals and all 42 extra-point attempts. He doesn't have jaw-dropping distance on his kicks, but he makes them (and did hit a 45-yarder against LSU). Kody Schexnayder has some experience at punter in the search for Logan Cooke's replacement, but Tucker Day has the credentials as a former high school All-American.

Tom DiPace

2018 MISSISSIPPI STATE ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
17	Burnett, Logan	6-2/190	So.	Pelham, AL
7	Fitzgerald, Nick	6-5/230	Sr.	Richmond Hill, GA
12	Kirk, Rip	6-3/245	Jr.	Hattiesburg, MS
10	Thompson, Keytaon	6-4/225	So.	New Orleans, LA

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
21	Gibson, Nick	5-11/210	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
8	Hill, Kylin	5-11/215	So.	Columbus, MS
28	Lee, Dontavian	6-1/225	Sr.	Hattiesburg, MS
26	Murphy, Alec	6-0/235	Jr.	Nixa, MO
33	Rivers, Robert	5-11/210	Fr.	Ocala, FL
22	Williams, Aeris	6-1/220	Sr.	West Point, MS

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
6	Couch, Jamal	6-4/225	Jr.	Phenix City, AL
9	Dear, Malik	5-9/220	Jr.	Jackson, MS
38	Grant, Cason	5-11/170	Fr.	Abilene, TX
1	Guidry, Stephen	6-4/190	Jr.	New Roads, LA
86	Jackson, Jesse	6-2/210	Sr.	Petal, MS
3	Jason, Devonta	6-3/215	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
87	Mitchell, Osirus	6-4/210	So.	Sarasota, FL
23	Mixon, Keith	5-8/185	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
13	O'Connor, Travis	6-1/205	So.	Kenner, LA
89	Taylor, Vincent	5-10/190	So.	Memphis, TN
4	Thomas, Deddrick	5-9/190	Jr.	Memphis, TN
2	Todd, Reggie	6-4/200	So.	Mobile, AL
85	Williams, Austin	6-3/205	Fr.	Ocean Springs, MS

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
82	Green, Farrod	6-3/240	Jr.	Wesson, MS
81	Johnson, Justin	6-3/250	Sr.	Birmingham, AL
84	Jones, Dontea	6-4/230	So.	McCool, MS
80	Roberson, Christian	6-5/245	So.	Atlanta, GA
88	Warren, Powers	6-3/240	Fr.	Minnetonka, MN

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
61	Calhoun, Deion	6-3/320	Sr.	Pleasant Grove, AL
70	Champion, Tommy	6-5/315	Jr.	Jackson, MS
55	Eiland, Greg	6-8/330	So.	Philadelphia, MS
74	Jenkins, Elgton	6-4/315	Sr.	Clarksdale, MS
54	Mitchell, Blake	6-0/320	So.	Brentwood, TN
56	Parker, Dareuan	6-4/330	So.	Olive Branch, MS
68	Parker, Harry	6-5/265	Fr.	Mobile, AL
78	Phillips, Tyre	6-5/345	Jr.	Grenada, MS
64	Reese, Marlon	6-4/280	Sr.	Columbia, SC
51	Reese, Stewart	6-5/345	So.	Fort Pierce, FL
62	Stanic, Matt	6-4/345	Jr.	Madison, MS
75	Story, Michael	6-4/315	Jr.	Ripley, MS
63	Suggs, Cordavien	6-6/300	Fr.	Jackson, MS
79	Wilkerson, Evans	6-5/310	Jr.	Ridgeland, MS
73	Williams, Darryl	6-2/305	Jr.	Bessemer, AL

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
43	Adams, Fletcher	6-2/275	Jr.	Brandon, MS
97	Autry, Lee	6-2/310	Jr.	Albemarle, NC
96	Brown, Tre	6-4/310	Sr.	Ackerman, MS
4	Green, Gerri	6-4/255	Sr.	Greenville, MS
90	Harris, Grant	6-3/285	Sr.	Bolton, MS
95	Hoyett, Braxton	6-3/305	Sr.	Pelham, AL
59	Isaac, LaKevion	6-0/280	Jr.	McComb, MS
91	Jackson, James	6-3/345	Fr.	Pascagoula, MS
92	Jones, Kendell	6-4/285	Jr.	Pinson, AL
52	Jones, Kobe	6-4/270	So.	Starkville, MS
17	Odom, Aaron	6-2/265	Fr.	Jackson, MS
5	Rivers, Chauncey	6-3/275	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
94	Simmons, Jeffery	6-4/300	Jr.	Macon, MS
42	Spencer, Marquiss	6-4/285	Jr.	Greenwood, MS
9	Sweat, Montez	6-6/245	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA
34	Thomas, Cory	6-5/310	Sr.	Bessemer, AL
65	Timbs, Sherman	6-2/265	Fr.	Indianola, MS

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
56	Batiste, Kamau	5-11/210	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
58	Dunning, Tyler	6-1/240	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
6	Gay Jr., Willie	6-2/235	So.	Starkville, MS
51	Jennings, R.J.	6-0/240	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
10	Lewis, Leo	6-2/240	Jr.	Brookhaven, MS
53	Miller, Cameron	6-0/215	So.	Odessa, FL
48	Redmon, Chris	6-0/230	So.	Fayetteville, AR
40	Thompson, Erroll	6-1/250	So.	Florence, AL
50	Washington, Tim	6-3/230	Jr.	Yazoo City, MS

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
3	Abram, Johnathan	6-0/210	Sr.	Columbia, MS
19	Adegoke, Stephen	6-0/210	Sr.	Snellville, GA
25	Anderson, Somon	6-0/195	So.	New Orleans, LA
22	Armour, Blake	5-11/185	Fr.	Brighton, TN
1	Bryant, Brandon	6-0/215	Sr.	Tunica, MS
16	Charles, Korey	5-10/180	So.	Miami, FL
32	Cole, Brian	6-2/210	Jr.	Saginaw, MI
49	Conner, Aadreekis	6-2/200	Fr.	Port Gibson, MS
28	Craft, Londyn	6-0/195	Fr.	Rio Rancho, NM
13	Dantzler, Cameron	6-2/175	So.	Hammond, LA
20	Dixon, Taury	5-9/165	So.	Madison, MS
35	Guidry, Landon	6-0/190	Fr.	Spring Hill, TN
11	Landrews, Jaquarius	6-0/195	Jr.	Summit, MS
41	McLaurin, Mark	6-2/215	Sr.	Collins, MS
29	Morgan, C.J.	6-0/200	So.	Bossier City, LA
7	Murphy, Marcus	6-1/195	Fr.	West Point, MS
2	Peters, Jamal	6-2/220	Sr.	Bassfield, MS
24	Rayford, Chris	6-0/200	Sr.	Byhalia, MS
8	Smitherman, Maurice	5-10/190	Jr.	Adamsville, AL
33	Williams, Tyler	6-2/175	Fr.	Oxford, MS

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
66	Baldwin, Joel (LS)	6-3/220	Sr.	Tupelo, MS
67	Blackwell, Paul (LS)	5-9/200	Jr.	Pascagoula, MS
47	Christmann, Jace (K)	6-0/195	So.	Houston, TX
42	Day, Tucker (P/K)	6-0/200	So.	Brentwood, TN
23	Freeman, Raymond (LS)	6-1/210	Fr.	Cantonment, FL
26	Lawless, Jordan (K)	6-0/190	So.	Lindale, TX
30	Mills, Dan (K)	6-0/190	Fr.	Canton, OH
27	Schexnayder, Kody (P)	5-10/195	Jr.	River Ridge, LA
39	Swanson, Nathan (LS)	6-5/230	So.	Norcross, GA
37	Wall, Brad (K)	5-8/165	So.	Ocean Springs, MS

SCOUTING THE BULLDOGS

Opposing Coaches Size up Mississippi State

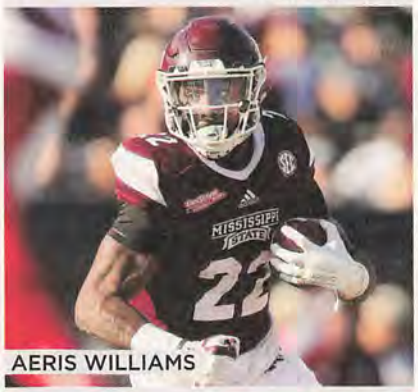
"I've heard about how Joe Moorhead doesn't know the Mississippi State 'culture' or that he doesn't 'understand the South.' Come on. You know what every high school recruit and every mamma and daddy understand? Winning. You think Dan Mullen understood it when he first got there? He's from New Hampshire! ... Joe will put those kids in position to win on offense, and he made a critical hire at defensive coordinator (Bob Shoop), who knows how to recruit this league and how to defend it. Joe is an extremely likable guy who will win in recruiting, and that's the first big step to winning on Saturdays. James (Franklin) swears by him, and that's enough for me. ... I don't know if Nick Fitzgerald can be ready by August. That was a brutal injury. You're not just bouncing back from something like that. But that's one tough son of a gun. If anyone can do it, he will. ... I don't think you can underestimate the loss of Dan Mullen. The truth of the matter is Dan probably took that program as far as he could take it, and took it where many thought it couldn't go. That's a big bar to reach for Joe. It was time for Dan to leave; he knew it, we all knew it. Sometimes it's just the natural turn. We all see it as coaches. ... You know what helps a first-year coach? A good pass rush. Montez Sweat and (Jeffery) Simmons are just beasts. Both of them. As disruptive a pair as you'll see in the college game. We recruited Simmons, and he went through a tough time before he even got there. You know what? Second chances work sometimes. He has become a model student-athlete there."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 4-4 SEC

Sept. 2	Charleston Southern	W	49-0
Sept. 9	at Louisiana Tech	W	57-21
Sept. 16	LSU	W	37-7
Sept. 23	at Georgia	L	3-31
Sept. 30	at Auburn	L	10-49
Oct. 14	BYU	W	35-10
Oct. 21	Kentucky	W	45-7
Oct. 28	at Texas A&M	W	35-14
Nov. 4	Massachusetts	W	34-23
Nov. 11	Alabama	L	24-31
Nov. 18	at Arkansas	W	28-21
Nov. 23	Ole Miss	L	28-31
Dec. 30	vs. Louisville #	W	31-27

#TaxSlayer Bowl



AERIS WILLIAMS

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Nick Fitzgerald	286	159	1,782	15	11
Keytaon Thompson	66	32	388	2	2

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Aeris Williams	236	1,107	4.7	6
Nick Fitzgerald	162	984	6.1	14
Keytaon Thompson	75	446	5.9	6
Kylin Hill	78	393	5.0	2

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Jesse Jackson	27	276	10.2	0
Donald Gray	24	214	8.9	3
Jordan Thomas	22	263	12.0	3
Deddrick Thomas	22	227	10.3	4

KICKING: Jace Christmann, 12-14 FGs, 42-42 PATs, 78 points

TACKLES: Mark McLaurin, 79; Johnathan Abram, 71

SACKS: Montez Sweat, 10.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Mark McLaurin, 6

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.0 ppg	7	41
Rushing	251.7 ypg	2	11
Passing	166.9 ypg	14	13
Total	418.6 ypg	6	46
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	20.9 ppg	6	26
Rushing	131.6 ypg	4	28
Passing	174.7 ypg	4	12
Total	306.3 ypg	3	10
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	8	72

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

KEYTAON AT THE WHEEL Nick Fitzgerald's Egg Bowl injury cleared the stage for true freshman Keytaon Thompson, and while Thompson could not lead MSU to a storybook finish in that loss, the TaxSlayer Bowl did provide some optimism for the future and for 2018, should Fitzgerald suffer any kind of setback or another injury. Thompson led Mississippi State to a win against Louisville, running for 147 yards and three touchdowns on 27 carries. He was also 11-of-20 passing for 127 yards. Thompson took practice and scrimmage snaps with the first and second team in the spring, so he also is getting a full immersion in the new offense. While everyone expects Fitzgerald to be healthy and to take all the relevant snaps this fall, having a backup you believe in — and who can take over for Fitzgerald in 2019 — is always a good thing.

NO MORE BABYSITTING Joe Moorhead named Luke Getsy, 34, as his offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach. The two have a long history together — Getsy played QB at Akron for Moorhead and was later a grad assistant for him with the Zips. He also used to babysit Moorhead's kids. Getsy says the unique relationship is part of the reason why he made the tough decision to leave the Green Bay Packers, where he was the wide receivers coach, to return to the college game.

COMING UP HOT How do you get students excited for a new football coach? The answer at Mississippi State: cheese fries. Part of Moorhead's first 24 hours in Starkville was going to the local district popular with students and serving them one restaurant's popular cheese fries in the early hours of the morning. The line was wrapped down the block as Moorhead took photos and engaged with the students.

HE COULD GO ALL THE WAY Much has been made of Mississippi State's issues throwing the ball last year, and it did make the Bulldogs one-dimensional at times and easy to defend for some teams. But let's not forget that MSU could really run the ball. And not just in a ground-and-pound, four-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust kind of way. The Bulldogs had 89 runs go for at least 10 yards, which was tied for 20th nationally and third in the SEC behind Alabama and Georgia. And that was within an offensive scheme that focused on running between the tackles. In an offense that goes sideline to sideline, things could open up for more dynamic runs. And note this: The team's top six runners from a year ago all return.

STILL IN THE SEC Mississippi State's fifth defensive coordinator in as many seasons is a familiar name to many SEC fans. Bob Shoop comes to MSU from Tennessee, and he was also the coordinator at Vanderbilt during James Franklin's tenure. In between he was the defensive coordinator at Penn State. Things did not go well for Shoop with the Vols, but his defenses at Penn State and Vanderbilt were what made him one of the more sought-after assistant coaches in the country.



MARK McLAURIN

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	31.1	31
Defense	28.5	42
Margin	**+2.6**	**36**

Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.5%	20
Defense	35.6%	12
Margin	**+9.9%**	**10**

Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.5	79
Defense	5.2	40
Margin	**+0.3**	**56**

Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.4	72
Defense	4.4	62
Margin	**+0.0**	**73**

Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	2.7	38
Actual	-1	71
Margin	**-3.7**	**103**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

20+

MSU was extremely volatile in 2017. The Bulldogs went a ho-hum 7–5 against the spread, but only three games finished within 10 points of the spread — they overachieved by at least 20 points vs. the Vegas line on four occasions and underachieved by at least 17 points four times. Joe Moorhead's first task might be delivering a bit more stability.

+9.9

MSU boasts all the efficiency components that a new head coach craves. The Bulldogs' offense produced a 45.5 percent success rate in 2017 (20th in FBS), while the defense allowed just a 35.6 percent success rate (12th). This margin of plus-9.9 percentage points was 10th in the country and third in the SEC, behind only Alabama and Auburn.

20.8

Havoc rate is a team's tackles for a loss, forced fumbles and passes defensed (intercepted or broken up) divided by total defensive plays. MSU's havoc rate was 20.8 percent, seventh in FBS and second only to Alabama in the SEC. The Bulldogs' top four havoc creators — Jeffery Simmons, Montez Sweat, Gerri Green and Mark McLaurin — all return, too.

3,669

Over the last five seasons, Moorhead quarterbacks have averaged 3,669 passing yards and 31 touchdown passes per year with a 66 percent completion rate and 322 rushing yards per year to boot. Whatever Nick Fitzgerald and/or Keytaon Thompson are capable of, the odds are good that Moorhead and company can coax it out of them.

Paul Abell

2018 SIGNEES

When a coaching change occurs in early December, it can throw any recruiting class into flux, and that definitely had to be a fear for some schools because of the new early signing period. But that was not the case at Mississippi State in large part because of two factors: 1) outgoing coach Dan Mullen and his staff had already accumulated pretty much a full class, and 2) most of them were in-state prospects who bought in to playing together.

So Joe Moorhead and his staff did not have to do a significant amount of re-recruiting or worrying about players flipping to other schools. In fact, the biggest challenge was probably Mullen, who tried to recruit (mostly unsuccessfully) several players to Florida. Moorhead kept his top two wide receivers, Stephen Guidry and Malik Heath, on board, and added New Orleans product Devonta Jason (a top-200 player nationally) to the position.

Kwatrivous Johnson is a massive building block along the offensive line, and Jaden Crumedy could be a really good defensive end someday soon. Marcus Murphy could end up at running back, wide receiver or somewhere in the secondary; he may be very hard to keep off the field as a freshman.

The class was ranked 27th nationally and ninth in the SEC by the 247Sports Composite, which is about par for the course for Mississippi State. But Heath, Johnson, Crumedy and Murphy were four of the top five players in the state, and MSU also signed No. 7, defensive end Fabien Lovett. No other school signed more than one of Mississippi's top 10 prospects. MSU really owned the state, particularly over Ole Miss, due in part to its issues with the NCAA.

Any critique of the class would probably focus on linebacker; MSU signed two (Jett Johnson and junior college product Sh'mar Kilby-Lane), but that's a position where MSU needs more bodies, particularly at outside backer, and both of those guys are considered inside linebackers according to the recruiting services.

BY POSITION	
Wide Receivers	5
Defensive Linemen	4
Defensive Backs	4
Tight Ends	2
Offensive Linemen	2
Linebackers	2
Athletes	2
Quarterbacks	1
Running Backs	1
BY STATE	
Mississippi	13
Louisiana	5
Alabama	2
Florida	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1

Recruit Spotlight

Marcus Murphy

ATH • West Point, MS

If you believe that winning cannot be taught and that a player coming from a dominant high school program is an indicator of future success at the next level, then Marcus Murphy is your type of recruit.

Murphy signed with Mississippi State in December, weeks after leading nearby West Point to its second class 5A state championship in a row. West Point was the No. 1 team in the state and its most dominant — no opponent came within 19 points of beating it. And Murphy was a huge reason why.

Serving as a quarterback/running back combo, Murphy led the team in rushing (1,856 yards on 195 carries, 31 touchdowns) and passing (55-of-92 for 1,058 yards and nine touchdowns). It was that way for three years for Murphy, who at 6'1" and 190 pounds was rated a three-star prospect by the recruiting services.

He enrolled early at Mississippi State, where he could actually end up playing the one thing he didn't at West Point: defense. The Bulldogs started him out at safety and cornerback in the spring. He's not expected to start at either position, but it would surprise no one who watched him in high school to see Murphy force his way into a backup role and a prominent spot on special teams as a true freshman.

He has that "it" quality, and winning has followed him throughout his career.

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Aaron Brule	S	6-1/206	Metairie, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	466
Jaden Crumedy	DE	6-5/233	Hattiesburg, MS	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	342
Brad Cumbest	TE	6-5/235	Hurley, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,483
Esaias Furdge	CB	5-11/162	Clarksdale, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	700
Cameron Gardner	WR	6-4/215	Starkville, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,492
Stephen Guidry	WR	6-4/190	New Roads, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	15*
Malik Heath	WR	6-3/205	Jackson, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	172
Devonta Jason	WR	6-3/211	New Orleans, LA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	177
Kwatrivous Johnson	OT	6-7/360	Greenwood, MS	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	294
Jett Johnson	ILB	6-2/225	Tupelo, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,036
Kameron Jones	OT	6-5/280	Starkville, MS	★★★	--	★★★	1,313
Sh'mar Kilby-Lane	ILB	6-2/225	Hollywood, FL	★★★	★★★	★★	110*
Fabien Lovett	DE	6-3/285	Olive Branch, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	437
Jalen Mayden	QB	6-2/215	Sachse, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	361
Marcus Murphy	ATH	6-1/190	West Point, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	396
Johnquarise Patterson	WR	6-1/170	Pearl, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	649
Shawn Preston	S	6-0/191	Saint James, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	959
Jaylon Reed	CB	6-1/170	Olive Branch, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	951
Devon Robinson	DT	6-4/260	Memphis, TN	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,262
Geor'quarius Spivey	TE	6-4/220	Monroe, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★★	520
Nathaniel Watson	ATH	6-2/214	Maplesville, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	667
La'Damian Webb	RB	5-8/185	Opelika, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	893
Cameron Young	DT	6-3/310	Meadville, MS	★★★	--	★★	1,472

*junior college transfer

OLE MISS REBELS

National Forecast: 58 /// SEC West Prediction: 6

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	vs. Texas Tech #
Sept.	8	Southern Illinois
Sept.	15	Alabama
Sept.	22	Kent State
Sept.	29	at LSU
Oct.	6	UL Monroe
Oct.	13	vs. Arkansas %
Oct.	20	Auburn
Nov.	3	South Carolina
Nov.	10	at Texas A&M
Nov.	17	at Vanderbilt
Nov.	22	Mississippi State

#Houston, TX %Little Rock

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 5-7, 1-7 SEC

Matt Luke proved last year to be a capable head coach, coaxing six wins out of an Ole Miss team burdened by more than its share of off-the-field drama. Luke's job once again is to keep his team motivated without the carrot of a bowl game (barring a late reprieve from the NCAA). The offense, led by one of the nation's top groups of wide receivers, should score a bunch of points, especially if Luke can find a suitable replacement for 1,000-yard rusher Jordan Wilkins. Ole Miss' season will be defined by its defense, which was repeatedly gashed against the run in 2017 — to the tune of 270.5 rushing yards per game in SEC play. If the defense shows moderate improvement — most notably in the front seven — there's reason to believe Ole Miss can break even … or better in 2018.

Postseason: None

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Matt Luke

RECORD AT SCHOOL
6-6 (1 year)

CAREER RECORD
6-6 (1 year)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Phil Longo

DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS
Jason Jones, Wesley McGriff

LOCATION
Oxford, MS

STADIUM
Vaught-Hemingway Stadium (64,038)

Former late-night king Johnny Carson had a long-running bit in which he dressed as a fortune teller and would provide answers before he had questions.

Carnac might have this to say about Ole Miss football in 2018. "The answer for the Rebels is … right now. The question: When is losing a five-star quarterback a good thing?"



JORDAN TA'AMU

Ole Miss survived the potential transfer flood after its NCAA sanctions were revealed last December with only two hits among its more experienced players — wide receiver Van Jefferson and quarterback Shea Patterson. Patterson was rated the No. 1 quarterback in the 2016 signing class by three major recruiting services. Now he's at Michigan.

For Ole Miss, the move has little sting at the moment, and coaches hope it will feel that way in the long run. The Rebels were able to maintain an explosive offense with junior college transfer Jordan Ta'amu at the wheel after Patterson sustained a season-ending knee injury in the seventh game of the 2017 season.

Patterson's transfer allowed Ta'amu to be the unchallenged No. 1 and the focus of the offense in the spring. Ta'amu needed the first-team reps and got plenty of them.

Coach Matt Luke, no longer only an interim, needs a running back to emerge to help Ole Miss be diverse and productive on offense again.

Defensively, the Rebels hope young linebackers with a season of college experience can begin to make plays and help improve a defense that ranked 124th in the nation in stopping the run.

Luke, a popular former player and Ole Miss assistant coach, led the Rebels to a 6–6 mark in a tumultuous 2017 that included the cloud of the NCAA investigation hovering above. His candidacy for the full-time job was not looking strong until the Rebels won three of their last four games, including a 31–28 upset at No. 16 Mississippi State.

QUARTERBACKS Just like last year, Luke will head into preseason camp with a clear starter who had big success in a small window of playing time the previous season. And like last year, there's hopeful curiosity surrounding that starter. "I didn't see this coming," Ta'amu says. It has come, because in five starts he showed a big arm with the ability to use the intermediate game and limit turnovers. He completed 66.5 percent of his attempts with 11 touchdowns and four interceptions. The Rebels went 3–2 in Ta'amu's five starts, highlighted by a thrilling last-second victory at Kentucky and the Egg Bowl win in Starkville. Four-star freshman Matt Corral, the biggest signee of Luke's surprisingly strong recruiting class, will be the backup. The Long Beach, Calif., native enrolled early and went through spring drills. Redshirt freshman Alex Faniel, at 6'6" easily the tallest of the quarterbacks, is behind Corral.

RUNNING BACKS Who might replace 1,000-yard rusher Jordan Wilkins is anybody's guess. It could be junior college transfer Scottie Phillips, who twice reached that mark at Jones County (Miss.) Junior College. Junior D'Vaughn Pennamon, at 5'11" and

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

238 pounds, will have the inside track for the job if he recovers from offseason knee surgery. Phillips, running behind a line in the spring that was missing several key components, showed some swivel between the tackles and explosiveness in the open field. Pennamon can be a punishing runner if he gains momentum. Junior Eric Swinney ran with the first team in the spring and will be in the mix as well. A wild card to watch will be junior Armani Linton, a former safety. Tall and athletic at 6'2", 218, Linton was slowed in the spring by a hamstring injury. Luke has expressed a desire to get Linton — a former four-star recruit at safety — on the field somewhere. True freshman Isaiah Woullard is an intriguing prospect. He is the all-time leading rusher in Mississippi High School history (8,294 yards) but was only a two-star recruit.

RECEIVERS It's this position that could make the offense dynamic. Junior A.J. Brown led the SEC with 75 catches for 1,252 yards last year. He had 11 touchdown catches and is a projected top-10 pick in the 2019 NFL Draft. DK Metcalf, a sophomore, is a matchup problem at 6'4" and is one of three returning receivers who caught at least 39 passes a year ago. Offensive coordinator Phil Longo especially likes Metcalf on corner fades in the end zone, the play with which Metcalf caught the game-winner in the closing seconds at Kentucky. DaMarkus Lodge, seldom seen as a sophomore, matured into a dependable out-route threat as a junior last year. He returns as the most experienced pass catcher in a talented group. Keep an eye out for tight end Dawson Knox, more of a pass catcher than blocker in Longo's system. Knox is a precise route runner with good hands who thrived more with Ta'amu at quarterback than with Patterson.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Left tackle Greg Little, another five-star signee in the 2016 class, is also a projected first-round pick in 2019. He's the anchor of an experienced group that loses only right tackle Rod Taylor from a year ago and returns five players who have started at least eight games. Three players in that group — Little and seniors Javon Patterson and Sean Rawlings — have started for multiple seasons. Rawlings and Alex Givens were held out of spring for health reasons but will be good to go in August. Their absence allowed younger guys such as sophomore Royce Newman and redshirt freshman Ben Brown to get valuable first-unit reps. Givens overtook Jordan Sims at right guard last year, but Brown's emergence could allow Givens to slide out to right tackle, where he started five games as a freshman in 2016.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN The Rebels will miss talented pass-rushing ends Marquis Haynes and Breeland Speaks. They hope Victor Evans and Qaadir Sheppard emerge as the next wave of playmakers. Evans was playing at a high level



WR **A.J. BROWN**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY REBELS

JORDAN TA'AMU, QB Ta'amu completed 66.5 percent of his passes and showed poise when his role changed from seldom-used backup to starter.

GREG LITTLE, LT A former five-star recruit, Little has lived up to the hype and likely will be a first-round pick in the 2019 NFL Draft.

A.J. BROWN, WR Brown set a school single-season record with 1,252 receiving yards in 2017. His size makes him a mismatch in the slot.

SEAN RAWLINGS, C A versatile senior who can play other positions if needed, Rawlings brings intelligence in setting protections and skill in using angles to win one-on-one battles.

JOSIAH COATNEY, DT A high-energy player, Coatney had 8.5 tackles for a loss and 3.5 sacks as a junior last year.

KEY LOSSES

MARQUIS HAYNES, DE Haynes used his quickness off the edge to become the school's career sack leader with 32, including 7.5 last season.

BREELAND SPEAKS, DL Speaks played tackle much of his career but excelled when moved to end in the middle of last season.

DEMARQUIS GATES, LB Gates led the team with 114 tackles and was second in tackles for a loss with 10.

JORDAN WILKINS, RB Wilkins rushed for 1,011 yards and helped the Ole Miss run game improve from mediocre to solid throughout the season.

VAN JEFFERSON, WR One of only two impact players to transfer, Jefferson had dependable hands in the slot.

RISING STAR

Big things are expected — and needed — from junior college transfer **VERNON DASHER.** The Georgia native will lineup as a defensive back along the line of scrimmage in the 4-2-5, providing support against the run as well as helping in pass coverage.

with 18 tackles and five tackles for a loss through five games before going down with an injury. Sheppard, a transfer from Syracuse, was hobbled last season and appeared in only three games. Junior tackle Josiah Coatney plays with a high motor. His camp performance a year ago elevated him ahead of Speaks, who eventually moved outside. Coatney and junior Benito Jones give the Rebels two solid players at the down spots. The staff is hoping junior college transfer Hal Northern will provide depth.

LINEBACKERS The Rebels need better play from their linebackers if they hope to improve against the run. Middle linebacker was never settled in 2017 as three different players took a turn, one of them twice. Among the trio was Detric Bing-Dukes, who ran first team in defensive coordinator Wesley McGriff's 4-2-5 scheme during the spring. Junior Willie Hibbler, a converted tight end, ran with the first team at the outside linebacker spot.



Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	**14**	**DK Metcalf (So.)**	3	DeMarcus Gregory (Fr.)
WR	**1**	**A.J. Brown (Jr.)**	13	Braylon Sanders (So.)
WR	**5**	**DaMarkus Lodge (Sr.)**		Miles Battle (Fr.)
LT	**74**	**Greg Little (Jr.)**	72	Royce Newman (So.)
LG	**79**	**Javon Patterson (Sr.)**	70	Jordan Sims (Sr.)
C	**50**	**Sean Rawlings (Sr.)**	61	Eli Johnson (So.)
RG	70	Jordan Sims (Sr.)	55	Ben Brown (Fr.)
RT	**67**	**Alex Givens (Jr.)**	72	Royce Newman (So.)
TE	**9**	**Dawson Knox (Jr.)**	15	Octavious Cooley (Jr.)
QB	10	Jordan Ta'amu (Sr.)	2	Matt Corral (Fr.)
RB	28	D'Vaughn Pennamon (Jr.)	22	Scottie Phillips (Jr.)
DEFENSE (4)				
DE	4	Victor Evans (Sr.)	41	Brenden Williams (Jr.)
DT	**95**	**Benito Jones (Jr.)**	90	Ross Donelly (Sr.)
DT	**40**	**Josiah Coatney (Jr.)**	12	Austrian Robinson (Jr.)
DE	97	Qaadir Sheppard (Jr.)	89	Ryder Anderson (So.)
LB	43	Detric Bing-Dukes (Sr.)	7	Mohamed Sanogo (So.)
LB	17	Willie Hibbler (Jr.)	32	Josh Clarke (Fr.)
STAR	3	Vernon Dasher (Jr.)	28	Cam Ordway (Sr.)
CB	5	Ken Webster (Sr.)	21	Javien Hamilton (Sr.)
CB	**15**	**Myles Hartsfield (Jr.)**	1	D.D. Bowie (So.)
SS	**36**	**Zedrick Woods (Sr.)**	8	C.J. Miller (So.)
FS	31	Jaylon Jones (Jr.)	26	C.J. Moore (Sr.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	92	Luke Logan (So.)	**KR**	1 A.J. Brown (Jr.)
P	96	Mac Brown (So.)	**PR**	31 Jaylon Jones (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

Bing-Dukes (254 pounds) and Hibbler (227) are bigger than DeMarquis Gates, who led the team in tackles from his outside linebacker spot last year. "We need some size in the box even if we lose a little speed," Luke says. "We need to be more physical." There's plenty of opportunity for young players such as sophomore Mohamed Sanogo, Josh Clarke and Zi Baker. Clarke seemed to stand out in the spring. Three new linebackers will arrive in August. By definition, the Star position in the scheme is a defensive back, but it often plays like a linebacker. Junior college transfer Vernon Dasher, who enrolled in January, is a player to watch at this spot.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Senior Ken Webster and junior Myles Hartsfield give the Rebels experienced corners, and athletic sophomore D.D. Bowie provides intriguing depth at the position. Both Webster and Hartsfield were limited in the spring. Cornerbacks coach Charles Clark was able to spend a lot of time with Bowie, who coaches hope will play a larger role this season. He appeared in eight games last year. Javien Hamilton, a first-year junior college transfer in 2017, also had a solid spring. Senior strong safety Zedrick Woods enters his third season as a starter. Senior C.J. Moore and junior Jaylon Jones will split time at the free safety position.

SPECIALISTS The Rebels will have a new placekicker and punter. Walk-on sophomore Luke Logan will be the kicker — his leg strength is solid but his accuracy under fire is to be determined. Logan connected on both of his attempts under 30 yards last year but missed his only field goal from beyond that. The punter will be Mac Brown, also a walk-on. He averaged 46 yards per punt as a high school senior.

2018 OLE MISS ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
4	Carter, Jacob	5-11/185	So.	Pontotoc, MS
2	Corral, Matt	6-1/203	Fr.	Long Beach, CA
19	Faniel, Alex	6-6/248	Fr.	Glen Allen, VA
13	Restmeyer, Grant	6-3/238	So.	McKinney, TX
10	Ta'amu, Jordan	6-2/212	Sr.	Pearl City, HI

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
25	Buford, D.K.	5-11/231	Sr.	Oxford, MS
29	Linton, Armani	6-2/218	Jr.	Walnut, MS
28	Pennamon, D'Vaughn	5-11/238	Jr.	Houston, TX
22	Phillips, Scott	5-8/212	Jr.	Ellisville, MS
24	Swinney, Eric	5-9/214	Jr.	Riverdale, GA
26	VanRonzelen, Jake	5-11/190	Fr.	Jefferson City, MO
21	Wells, KeShun	5-7/170	Jr.	Moss Point, MS
26	Woullard, Isaiah	5-9/200	Fr.	Hattiesburg, MS

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
17	Allen, Floyd	5-11/185	Sr.	Houston, TX
86	Beck, Drake	6-1/190	Fr.	Columbus, GA
1	Brown, A.J.	6-1/225	Jr.	Starkville, MS
81	Drew, Ryan	5-10/194	Jr.	Crystal Springs, MS
82	Farlow, Jared	6-0/180	Fr.	Grantville, GA
3	Gregory, DeMarcus	6-1/209	Fr.	Duncan, SC
5	Lodge, DaMarkus	6-2/199	Sr.	Cedar Hill, TX
14	Metcalf, DK	6-4/225	So.	Oxford, MS
80	Ricketts, Josh	6-0/197	Fr.	Madison, MS
13	Sanders, Braylon	6-0/188	So.	Hogansville, GA
85	Weber, Alex	6-1/186	Sr.	Lake City, FL
6	White, Kam'ron	6-2/201	Fr.	Clinton, MS

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
16	Angel, Gabe	6-3/238	So.	Lebanon, TN
15	Cooley, Octavious	6-3/268	Jr.	Laurel, MS
84	Haynes, Nick	6-1/221	So.	Washington, PA
87	Howard, Michael	6-5/257	Jr.	Green Cove Springs, FL
9	Knox, Dawson	6-4/250	Jr.	Nashville, TN
82	Mathis, Jacob	6-4/246	So.	Tampa, FL
7	Pellerin, Jason	6-4/237	Jr.	New Iberia, LA

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
55	Brown, Ben	6-5/300	Fr.	Vicksburg, MS
65	Cox, Peyton	6-1/290	Fr.	Metairie, LA
67	Givens, Alex	6-6/304	Jr.	Nashville, TN
78	Gray, Tony	6-5/300	Fr.	Loganville, GA
61	Johnson, Eli	6-1/300	So.	Taylor, MS
54	Johnson, Sam	6-1/268	Jr.	Nashville, TN
74	Little, Greg	6-6/325	Jr.	Allen, TX
71	Mathews, Bryce	6-6/284	So.	Brentwood, TN
72	Newman, Royce	6-5/301	So.	Nashville, IL
79	Patterson, Javon	6-3/314	Sr.	Petal, MS
59	Plash, Samuel	6-3/278	Fr.	Mobile, AL
50	Rawlings, Sean	6-5/294	Sr.	Madison, MS
70	Sims, Jordan	6-4/330	Sr.	Homewood, AL
68	Tuitt, Chandler	6-4/311	So.	Fayetteville, GA

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
89	Anderson, Ryder	6-6/244	So.	Katy, TX
40	Coatney, Josiah	6-4/302	Jr.	Douglasville, GA
94	Coley, James	6-3/245	Jr.	Natchez, MS
34	Curtis, Shawn	6-2/244	Jr.	Doral, FL
93	David, Sincere	6-1/337	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
90	Donelly, Ross	6-1/318	Sr.	Houston, TX
4	Evans, Victor	6-3/243	Sr.	Dallas, TX
96	Hebert, Jordan	5-11/291	Sr.	Klein, TX
45	Johnson, Amani	6-0/226	Fr.	Abbeville, MS
95	Jones, Benito	6-2/315	Jr.	Waynesboro, MS
9	Northern, Hal	6-1/295	Jr.	Tunica, MS
88	Reyes, Ty	6-1/261	So.	Marietta, GA
12	Robinson, Austrian	6-4/280	Jr.	New York, NY
97	Sheppard, Qaadir	6-3/249	Jr.	Bronx, NY
98	Wiley, Charles	6-2/258	So.	Stockbridge, GA
41	Williams, Brenden	6-3/227	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
19	Winters, Markel	6-3/252	Sr.	Tallahassee, FL

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
14	Baker, Zikerrion	6-1/216	Fr.	Mooringsport, LA
43	Bing-Dukes, Detric	6-1/254	Sr.	Tucker, GA
32	Clarke, Josh	6-2/217	Fr.	Jefferson, LA
35	Evans, Donta	6-1/236	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
17	Hibbler, Willie	6-3/227	Jr.	Sardis, MS
49	Labanc, Ryan	6-1/225	Fr.	Willoughby, OH
7	Sanogo, Mohamed	6-2/228	So.	Plano, TX

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
1	Bowie, D.D.	6-0/180	So.	Morton, MS
25	Custis, Montrell	6-0/188	Jr.	Jonesboro, GA
3	Dasher, Vernon	6-1/200	Jr.	Baxley, GA
39	Fountain, Kweisi	6-1/208	Sr.	Biloxi, MS
21	Hamilton, Javien	5-10/176	Sr.	Louin, MS
11	Harris, A.J.	5-11/198	Fr.	Madison, AL
15	Hartsfield, Myles	5-11/199	Jr.	Sayreville, NJ
32	Johnson, Jerry	5-10/197	Jr.	Starkville, MS
31	Jones, Jaylon	5-11/186	Jr.	Dallas, TX
8	Miller, C.J.	6-0/191	So.	Powder Springs, GA
37	Mitchell, Art	5-10/196	Jr.	Yazoo City, MS
26	Moore, C.J.	5-11/198	Sr.	Bassfield, MS
28	Ordway, Cam	5-11/182	Sr.	Pulaski, TN
47	Rocconi, Ty	5-11/173	Fr.	Mobile, AL
5	Webster, Ken	5-11/194	Sr.	Decatur, GA
36	Woods, Zedrick	5-11/201	Sr.	Lake City, FL

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
62	Becker, Cole (LS)	6-1/245	Fr.	Phoenix, AZ
96	Brown, Mac (P)	6-3/196	So.	Eden Prairie, MN
94	Cooper, Jack (K/P)	6-0/164	Fr.	Fresno, CA
98	Lewis, John (P)	6-0/195	So.	Burnside, KY
92	Logan, Luke (K)	5-11/183	So.	Hattiesburg, MS
99	Nasiatka, Patrick (K)	6-2/210	Jr.	Louisville, CO
88	Propst, Jack (LS)	5-10/192	So.	Brentwood, TN
58	Taylor, Mike (LS)	6-1/194	Jr.	Jackson, TN
95	Way, Isaac (K)	5-9/175	So.	Franklin, TN

SCOUTING THE REBELS

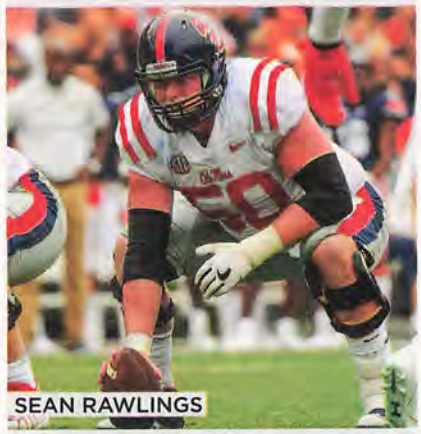
Opposing Coaches Size up Ole Miss

"I don't care what anyone says or how they try to spin it there, this is dead program walking. At least for a couple of years. They lost an elite quarterback and receiver because they didn't want to hang around for the NCAA fallout, and they're still dealing with that on the road in recruiting. Hey, there's no honor among thieves in recruiting. The big thing right now is what happens with the NCAA. Once that gets resolved, you at least have a plan. ... There were some really qualified coaches who wanted that job, but only with a significant commitment to security. I'm talking six or seven years of commitment. I truly believe that's why Matt (Luke) was retained. It's easy to move on from him once it hits rock bottom. And I don't say that lightly because I really enjoy Matt. He's a good guy who's in an untenable situation. ... A.J. Brown might be the best receiver in our league. A physical, tough, catch anything receiver. And he can run. The question is, can (Jordan) Ta'amu get him the ball consistently? I know everyone is talking about the great numbers Ta'amu put up last season when Shea Patterson got hurt. But he wasn't facing the best defenses in our league. He had a few gimme putts there. I want to see if he can do it when the big boys are on the field. ... The one place where you're really going to see the NCAA stuff impact this program is depth. I know people always laugh when we talk about depth, but in this league, you're in deep trouble without it. They're just not as deep on the lines of scrimmage as they need to be."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-6, 3-5 SEC

Sept.	2	South Alabama	W	47-27
Sept.	9	Tennessee-Martin	W	45-23
Sept.	16	at California	L	16-27
Sept.	30	at Alabama	L	3-66
Oct.	7	at Auburn	L	23-44
Oct.	14	Vanderbilt	W	57-35
Oct.	21	LSU	L	24-40
Oct.	28	Arkansas	L	37-38
Nov.	4	at Kentucky	W	37-34
Nov.	11	UL Lafayette	W	50-22
Nov.	18	Texas A&M	L	24-31
Nov.	23	at Mississippi State	W	31-28



SEAN RAWLINGS

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Shea Patterson	260	166	2,259	17	9
Jordan Ta'amu	**173**	**115**	**1,682**	**11**	**4**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Jordan Wilkins	155	1,011	6.5	9
D'Vaughn Pennamon	**53**	**217**	**4.1**	**2**
Eric Swinney	**41**	**195**	**4.8**	**3**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
A.J. Brown	**75**	**1,252**	**16.7**	**11**
Van Jefferson	42	456	10.9	1
DaMarkus Lodge	**41**	**698**	**17.0**	**7**
D.K. Metcalf	**39**	**646**	**16.6**	**7**
Jordan Wilkins	26	241	9.3	1

KICKING: Gary Wunderlich, 17-21 FGs, 34-36 PATs, 85 points

TACKLES: DeMarquis Gates, 114; Breeland Speaks, 67

SACKS: Marquis Haynes, 7.5

INTERCEPTIONS: **C.J. Moore, 3; Javien Hamilton, 3**

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.8 ppg	5	33
Rushing	133.9 ypg	11	104
Passing	328.4 ypg	1	11
Total	462.3 ypg	2	18
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	34.6 ppg	13	110
Rushing	245.3 ypg	13	124
Passing	214.2 ypg	9	52
Total	459.5 ypg	14	116
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	12	97

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

REBEL FOR LIFE While some Ole Miss players transferred after the NCAA sanctions came down, left tackle Greg Little chose to stay. That's huge for Matt Luke's first season as full-time coach. "There was no decision. I was an Ole Miss Rebel the whole time," says Little, a former five-star recruit from Allen, Texas. He scoffed at rumors of his departure — including one that had him on the University of Michigan campus.

SPEAKING OF SANCTIONS The absence of an NCAA investigation has had a positive impact on the program. "I'm so happy that we're out of the tunnel, and everything's done," offensive coordinator Phil Longo says. "Kind of this new era with Matt Luke — recruiting has skyrocketed. It's been great. The attitude of our players has never changed. It's nice to be able to come out and focus on our job and go to work." The school did appeal some of the sanctions, specifically a bowl ban for the 2018 season and restrictions on unofficial campus visits for recruits. It hopes to hear a final word this summer.

WELCOME BACK CLARK Charles Clark joined the staff in the offseason as cornerbacks coach. He was a three-year starter for Ole Miss on teams coached by David Cutliffe and Ed Orgeron. Clark coached at Oregon last season and Colorado before that. With Clark on board, Jason Jones, who coached corners the previous five seasons, will handle the safeties. The other staff newcomer is linebackers coach Jon Sumrall, who was at Troy last season.

TA'AMU'S DEVELOPMENT After Shea Patterson's season-ending injury, quarterback Jordan Ta'amu was thrust into the starting role in the eighth game of the season. The way he responded helped soften the blow of Patterson's transfer. Ta'amu started the last five games and passed for 1,682 yards with 11 touchdowns, four interceptions and a 66.5 completion percentage. "His confidence is typical for a guy who played in eight games," Longo says. "He's not only improving the things he needs to do, he's helped me to prepare other guys."

POSITION CHANGE Armani Linton, a fourth-year junior, was never consistently able to get on the field in the secondary. He hopes to find a larger role at running back. Luke announced Linton's position swap at the beginning of spring drills. Linton was rated a four-star prospect and the No. 14 safety in the nation by the 247Sports Composite as a senior at tiny Walnut (Miss.) High School following the 2014 season. During the spring, Linton — who has been an asset on special teams — showed a willingness to lower his head and deliver contact, but he remained buried on the depth chart while learning the position.

LONE STAR OPENER Ole Miss will open the season on Sept. 1 against Texas Tech at NRG Stadium in Houston. It will be the third time in five years for the Rebels to open at a neutral site. They defeated Boise State 35–13 at the Georgia Dome in 2014 and lost 45–34 to Florida State in Orlando in 2016.



DAMARKUS LODGE

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.7	65
Defense	29.2	58
Margin	**+0.5**	**58**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	45.5%	21
Defense	43.3%	87
Margin	**+2.2%**	**54**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	6.9	9
Defense	6.2	99
Margin	**+0.7**	**35**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.9	25
Defense	4.6	86
Margin	**+0.3**	**49**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-4.7	105
Actual	-5	97
Margin	**-0.3**	**73**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

+5.1

The Rebels got a head start on life without Shea Patterson: Over the last five games, with Patterson injured and Jordan Ta'amu behind center, Ole Miss averaged 0.7 more yards per play (7.3 vs. 6.6 with Patterson) and 5.1 more points per game (35.8 vs. 30.7). They also won as many games, going 3–2 vs. Patterson's 3–4, with Ta'amu topping Patterson's passer rating (164.5 vs. 151.5).

7.6

Ole Miss' offense was good at staying on schedule in 2017. The Rebels averaged 7.6 yards per play on first down, fourth in the country and behind only Missouri (7.7) in the SEC. Unfortunately, the Rebels' defense gave away a lot of those gains, allowing 6.3 yards per play on first down (95th).

43.3

The defense was bad by most measures. Efficiency? Ole Miss allowed a 43.3 percent success rate, 87th in FBS. Explosiveness? They gave up 2.7 gains per game of 30-plus yards, 100th. Finishing drives? They allowed 4.6 points per scoring opportunity, 86th. Perhaps not surprisingly, they also gave up their most points per game (34.6) since the 4–8 campaign of 2010 (35.2).

45

There can be value in being different than everyone else. Ole Miss ran the ball just 45 percent of the time on standard downs (first downs, second-and-7 or fewer, third-and-4 or fewer) and 26 percent on passing downs. Nationally, that ranked 128th and 114th, respectively, and ranked 14th in the SEC in both categories.

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2018 SIGNEES

Ole Miss should feature one of the top receiving units in the country this season. Things, though, could look vastly different in 2019, and Rebels coach Matt Luke made preparing for the future at the position a priority in his 2018 signing class. The Rebels added two four-star receivers in Miles Battle from Texas and Elijah Moore from Florida. They also signed Demarcus Gregory, a mid-year enrollee from South Carolina, and Tylan Knight, a lightly recruited — though very intriguing — prospect from Pearl, Miss.

Gregory gained valuable experience as he ran with the second team in spring drills. It's likely he will see the field in 2018. Gregory and Battle stand 6'3" and 6'4", respectively, giving the Rebels two attractive options on the outside. Moore, at 5'11", will likely play the slot.

Knight's slight frame (5'7", 170) limited his interest on the recruiting trail — Ole Miss was the only Power 5 school to offer — but he was highly productive in Mississippi 6A football, the state's largest classification. He had 2,742 all-purpose yards and 25 touchdowns during his career and had 117 tackles at safety as a senior. He is expected to play on offense for Ole Miss at slot receiver or running back.

Defensively, Luke sought to improve linebacker play by loading up at that position. Junior college transfer Vernon Dasher had an impressive showing in spring practice playing a physical style that endeared him to the coaching staff. Dasher likely will play the Star in the Rebels' 4-2-5 defense. He will be called on for pass coverage in that position but will also become the third linebacker when the Rebels line up in a 4-3 look.

The Rebels also added five players who could see time at defensive tackle, including 330-pound Noah Jefferson and 345-pound Jalen Cunningham — both three-star recruits. Jefferson is one of four junior college recruits in the class.

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	6
Linebackers	5
Wide Receivers	4
Defensive Backs	3
Running Backs	2
Quarterbacks	1
Offensive Linemen	1
BY STATE	
Mississippi	7
Alabama	6
Florida	2
Georgia	2
California	1
Nevada	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1

Recruit Spotlight

Matt Corral

QB • Long Beach, CA

The early commitment of quarterback Matt Corral gave some much-needed credibility to Matt Luke's first signing class, and no doubt impacted the wide receivers Luke was able to add later.

Corral, a four-star recruit who was recruited heavily by USC and Florida, drew comparisons to recent Ole Miss quarterback Chad Kelly during spring practice. Kelly became known as a physical runner with a soft and accurate touch on the deep ball, characteristics Corral has shown. He also showed the uncertainty that comes from inexperience.

Overall coaches were pleased with Corral's play.

"He's extremely talented, and he's got a huge arm," offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Phil Longo says. "He needs to make the transition, and that's what he's doing right now from the speed of the high school game to the speed of the college game."

Corral was rated the No. 63 player overall and the No. 4 pro style quarterback by the 247Sports Composite. He threw for 2,495 yards and 29 touchdowns as a senior at Long Beach Poly High School and accounted for more than 11,000 yards and 123 touchdowns as a four-year starter at Oaks Christian School and Long Beach Poly.

There was no official announcement by the coaching staff, but Corral likely will enter the 2018 season as the No. 2 quarterback on the depth chart, behind senior Jordan Ta'amu.

"We're going to be just fine there," Longo says, "just fine."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Miles Battle	WR	6-4/187	Houston, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	330
Quentin Bivens	DT	6-3/290	Waynesboro, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,243
Matt Corral	QB	6-2/196	Long Beach, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
Jalen Cunningham	DT	6-6/345	Odenville, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★★	433
Vernon Dasher	OLB	6-3/215	Baxley, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	55*
Demarcus Gregory	WR	6-3/200	Duncan, SC	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	501
Hamilton Hall	OT	6-5/315	Atlanta, GA	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,067
JaKorey Hawkins	CB	6-0/185	Montgomery, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,103
Jonathan Hess	OLB	6-5/221	Vestavia Hills, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,279
KD Hill	DT	6-1/270	Eufaula, AL	★★★	★★★	★★★	834
Noah Jefferson	DT	6-6/330	Las Vegas, NV	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	19*
Jacquez Jones	OLB	6-1/225	Tuscaloosa, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	735
Tylan Knight	WR	5-7/170	Pearl, MS	★★	--	★★	2,696
Luke Knox	OLB	6-4/210	Brentwood, TN	★★★	--	★★★	1,890
Elijah Moore	WR	5-11/181	Fort Lauderdale, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	203
Hal Northern	DT	6-2/290	Tunica, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	62*
Scottie Phillips	RB	5-9/198	Ellisville, MS	★★★	★★★★	★★★	48*
Kevontae' Ruggs	OLB	6-4/190	Montgomery, AL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	458
Keidron Smith	CB	6-2/180	West Palm Beach, FL	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,274
Cameron White	S	6-2/195	Madison, MS	★★★	★★★	★★★	851
James Williams	DE	6-5/285	Jackson, MS	★★★	★★★★	★★★	463
Isaiah Woullard	RB	5-9/195	Hattiesburg, MS	★★	★★	★★	2,192

*junior college transfer

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

National Forecast: 25 /// SEC West Prediction: 4

2018 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	Northwestern State
Sept. 8	Clemson
Sept. 15	UL Monroe
Sept. 22	at Alabama
Sept. 29	vs Arkansas #
Oct. 6	Kentucky
Oct. 13	at South Carolina
Oct. 27	at Mississippi State
Nov. 3	at Auburn
Nov. 10	Ole Miss
Nov. 17	UAB
Nov. 24	LSU

#Arlington, TX

THE VERDICT

PROJECTION: 8-4, 5-3 SEC

As indicated by Jimbo Fisher's 10-year, $75 million contract, Texas A&M is serious about upgrading its status in the SEC West. Under Fisher's watch, Florida State won at least 10 games in six out of his eight seasons. That's the type of success envisioned in College Station, and Fisher's arrival should have an instant impact. The Aggies had several young players in prominent roles last fall, including a handful on a defense poised for marked improvement under new coordinator Mike Elko. Fisher's background on offense should ease the loss of receiver Christian Kirk and help the development of quarterback Nick Starkel. Texas A&M will be challenged right away with games against Clemson and Alabama in September. However, if the young talent develops, Fisher's first squad should finish in the top 25.

Postseason: TaxSlayer Bowl vs. Notre Dame

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Jimbo Fisher

RECORD AT SCHOOL
First Season

CAREER RECORD
83-23 (8 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Darrell Dickey

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Mike Elko

LOCATION
College Station, TX

STADIUM
Kyle Field (102,733)



JHAMON AUSBON

To some degree, Texas A&M fans are still celebrating stunning offseason victories over Florida State, Notre Dame and Oklahoma. Now, if something similar could be accomplished during the actual football season, the Aggies will really have reason to celebrate.

A&M aspires to join college football's elite and hopes to have taken three giant steps in that direction by hiring head coach Jimbo Fisher away from Florida State, defensive coordinator Mike Elko away from Notre Dame and strength and conditioning coach Jerry Schmidt from Oklahoma. At the very least the Aggies hope that the trio can lift the program out of the muck of mediocrity it's wallowed in the last four years.

A&M managed eight victories or fewer and finished no better than fourth in the SEC West Division in that four-year span. Those seasons typically featured fast starts and dramatic November collapses. In contrast, Fisher's teams at Florida State typically finished strong. He was 27–5 in November.

Fisher inherits a young roster that returns 15 starters. That includes the quarterback position, where the Aggies started two freshmen a year ago. However, improvement is more dependent on changing the team's personality than its personnel.

"We've got to continue to keep being physical," Fisher said during spring drills. "We've got to try to do a better job of that. We're getting more physical as we go. We're going to keep developing that every day."

Perhaps that will lead to better defense. The Aggies certainly hope so. A&M allowed 35 points or more in six games last season. Five of those games were lost. Last year, Notre Dame's defense, in its only season under Elko, held 10 opponents to 20 points or fewer.

If Fisher can make the Aggies more physical, if Schmidt can make them stronger and if Elko can improve the defense, nine victories could be a realistic goal.

That won't put A&M among the elite. But it could be another step in that direction.

QUARTERBACKS Nick Starkel is considered the incumbent starter even though last season he actually made fewer starts than fellow sophomore Kellen Mond. Either — or neither — could assume the starting role this season. Fisher stressed that the competition was open and the job would go to whoever could lead the offense. Perhaps that could be redshirt freshman Connor Blumrick or even true freshman James Foster. Starkel finished last season strong after returning from a knee injury sustained in the opening loss to UCLA, so he figures to be the best bet. He passed for more than 1,400 yards and 11 touchdowns in the last four games. However, Mond also had some good moments as a true freshman and is a much better runner.

RUNNING BACKS There is no lack of speed and breakaway ability in the backfield. Seven of junior Trayveon Williams' 16 career touchdown runs have covered between 22 and 89 yards. Though hampered by a sprained ankle much of last season, he still rushed for nearly 800 yards. Power is another matter. Difficulty converting on third- and fourth-

Williams: Chris Covatta; Ausbon: Peter Brouillet

and-1 has been a major source of frustration. To address that, Williams added about eight pounds of muscle in offseason workouts, while backups Kendall Bussey and Jacob Kibodi bulked up, too. Fisher further addressed strength and size with 240-pound Vernon Jackson and 220-pound Charles Strong as part of his recruiting class.

RECEIVERS The departure of Christian Kirk to the NFL and Damion Ratley to graduation leaves the Aggies without a proven big-play threat at the receiver position for the first time in a decade. However, there are several players who could develop into one. Sophomore Jhamon Ausbon caught 50 passes as a true freshman. Though he averaged only 11.4 yards per grab, that figure could spike as his role grows in the offense. Sophomore Camron Buckley showed flashes of becoming a deep threat, too. Sophomore Roshauud Paul is a waterbug of a slot receiver with the potential to turn short passes into big gains. The Aggies also have big hopes for incoming freshman Jalen Preston, a four-star receiver who was one of the most coveted recruits in Texas. At least one of those will have to fill a backup role, though. Unlike in recent seasons, A&M anticipates using the tight end extensively in Fisher's system. Junior college transfer Jace Sternberger figures to take over that role, although redshirt freshman Camron Horry — son of former NBA star Robert Horry — and prize freshman Glenn Beal will contend for playing time, too.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The entire 2017 starting unit returns intact, but that doesn't necessarily mean that all will remain in the starting lineup. The Aggies were mediocre in run blocking and merely solid in pass protection a year ago. Also, three true freshmen played the majority of the Belk Bowl and will challenge for starting jobs. Center Erik McCoy may be the best player on the offensive unit, so his job is secure. Sophomore Carson Green turned heads as a freshman, so he figures to start at either tackle spot. Beyond that, every other position is up for grabs. Left tackle Koda Martin and guard Keaton Sutherland struggled at times, while guard Connor Lanfear has been hampered by injuries the last two seasons. They must raise their level of play to hold off challenges from sophomore tackle Dan Moore and sophomore guard Jared Hocker, among others.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Perhaps the biggest surprise of 2017 was defensive end Landis Durham, who posted 10.5 sacks in his first season as a starter. The hope is that he'll build on — or at least maintain — that level of production. The concern is on the other end. Former junior college transfer Michael Clemons, who didn't do much as a backup, may be thrust into a starting role. He's added weight and muscle, which indicates he could be much improved. He needs to be. No other end on the roster has collegiate



RB **TRAYVEON WILLIAMS**

5-YEAR WIN TREND



KEY AGGIES

TRAYVEON WILLIAMS, RB Though hobbled by an injury most of 2017, Williams has rushed for 1,855 yards and 16 touchdowns in two seasons.

NICK STARKEL, QB Big-armed sophomore must stave off challenges for the starting job but passed for nearly 1,800 yards despite missing half the 2017 season because of injury.

TYREL DODSON, LB Coming off a breakout year in his first season as a starter; should contend for all-conference recognition.

DONOVAN WILSON, DB A sure tackler with a knack for forcing turnovers, Wilson is back after missing virtually all of last season with an injury.

KINGSLEY KEKE, DT Big, powerful presence has boosted the run defense and can provide an inside pass rush.

KEY LOSSES

CHRISTIAN KIRK, WR The primary big-play threat as a receiver and return man for three seasons opted for early entry to the NFL Draft.

ARMANI WATTS, S Four-year starter had 10 career interceptions and more than 200 tackles to earn All-SEC and third-team All-America honors.

DAMION RATLEY, WR Emerged in his final season as a big-play threat while averaging 23.1 yards per catch.

ZAYCOVEN HENDERSON, DT Despite struggling with foot injuries, Henderson was a productive starter who posted 15 tackles for a loss in the last two seasons.

KEITH FORD, RB A transfer from Oklahoma, Ford provided a power-running alternative to starter Trayveon Williams.

RISING STAR

Sophomore linebacker **ANTHONY HINES** probably won't enter the season as a starter, but he may quickly become one. He made steady strides last year and had strong outings against Florida, Auburn and LSU. As he continues to make progress, he'll be too good to keep on the sidelines.

playing experience, so depth is obviously cause for concern. Incoming freshman Bobby Brown could make an immediate contribution. On the interior, senior Kingsley Keke is a big, active tackle who figures to contend for all-conference honors. Sophomore Justin Madubuike has tremendous upside. Senior Daylon Mack has great ability but has lacked consistency.

LINEBACKERS Last season the Aggies upgraded their run defense from abysmal to average. A big reason they made progress — and project to keep getting better — was the play of inside linebacker Tyrel Dodson. He stepped into the middle and posted a team-high 105 tackles as a first-year starter. If he continues to improve, he could be A&M's best linebacker since Von Miller. Senior Otaro Alaka is entering his fourth season as a starter. He's been steady, but more is expected from him in Elko's scheme. He could see action in the middle, too. Anthony Hines and Buddy Johnson showed flashes of great potential in their debut seasons and will get much more playing time as sophomores. Indeed, either — or both — could emerge as starters. Redshirt freshman Santino Marchiol and sophomore Ikenna Okeke are needed for depth. Marchiol was sidelined by injury last year. Okeke is moving up from safety.



DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	2	**Jhamon Ausbon (So.)**		Jalen Preston (Fr.)
WR	14	Camron Buckley (So.)	6	Roshauud Paul (So.)
WR	16	Klyde Chriss (So.)	13	Kendrick Rogers (So.)
LT	75	**Koda Martin (Sr.)**	65	Dan Moore (So.)
LG	78	**Keaton Sutherland (Sr.)**	77	**Ryan McCollum (So.)**
C	64	**Erik McCoy (Jr.)**	76	Colton Prater (Jr.)
RG	73	Jared Hocker (So.)	70	**Connor Lanfear (Sr.)**
RT	54	Carson Green (So.)	74	Kellen Diesch (So.)
TE	81	Jace Sternberger (Jr.)	85	Camron Horry (Fr.)
QB	17	Nick Starkel (So.)	11	**Kellen Mond (So.)**
RB	5	**Trayveon Williams (Jr.)**	25	Kendall Bussey (Jr.)
DEFENSE (7)				
DE	46	**Landis Durham (Sr.)**	3	Tyree Johnson (Fr.)
DT	88	**Kingsley Keke (Sr.)**	93	Jayden Peevy (So.)
DT	95	Justin Madubuike (So.)	5	Daylon Mack (Sr.)
DE	2	Michael Clemons (Jr.)	33	Ondario Robinson (Fr.)
LB	25	**Tyrel Dodson (Jr.)**	19	Anthony Hines (So.)
LB	42	**Otaro Alaka (Sr.)**	32	Santino Marchiol (Fr.)
ROV	7	Buddy Johnson (So.)	20	Ikenna Okeke (So.)
CB	22	Clifford Chattman (So.)	10	Myles Jones (So.)
CB	21	**Charles Oliver (Jr.)**	29	**Debione Renfro (So.)**
S	6	Donovan Wilson (Sr.)	11	Larry Pryor (Jr.)
S	4	**Derrick Tucker (So.)**	14	Keldrick Carper (So.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	36	Daniel LaCamera (Sr.)	KR 5	Trayveon Williams (Jr.)
P	34	Braden Mann (Jr.)	PR 6	Roshauud Paul (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

DEFENSIVE BACKS Better results are anticipated from a secondary that was frequently burned in 2017 when A&M relied on man-to-man press coverage largely with true freshman cornerbacks. Debione Renfro and Myles Jones figure to be better in their second seasons, yet neither may be in the starting lineup. Clifford Chattman, a 6'5" sophomore, has drawn raves from two coaching staffs (this year's and last year's). He's regarded as the best corner on the roster but was ineligible last year. Junior Charles Oliver was solid in eight starts. Fingers are crossed he'll continue an upward trend. There isn't much concern at safety. Senior Donovan Wilson is back from an injury that forced him to miss almost the entire '17 campaign. He's shown a knack for forcing turnovers. Safety Derrick Tucker looks like a rising star. He's a strong tackler with excellent coverage skills.

SPECIALISTS Placekicking is solid with Daniel LaCamera. He's looking to build on a breakthrough year of sorts in which he converted 17-of-20 field goal attempts and hit from 52 yards. There is rebuilding to do elsewhere. Junior Braden Mann has punted twice in his career and not since his freshman season. Replacing the explosive Kirk in the return game is a bigger concern. Paul is a strong candidate to return punts. Williams and/or receiver Klyde Chriss may get the call on kickoffs. Whoever takes on those roles faces a tall task in replacing Kirk, who was among the nation's elite kick returners.

Starkel:; Chris Covatta Durham: AP

2018 TEXAS A&M ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
8	Blumrick, Connor	6-5/210	Fr.	Pearland, TX
4	Johnson, Shane	6-2/220	Jr.	Houston, TX
11	Mond, Kellen	6-2/210	So.	San Antonio, TX
18	Schneider, Bo	6-2/230	Jr.	Dallas, TX
17	Starkel, Nick	6-3/218	So.	Argyle, TX
19	Taylor, Colton	6-3/205	So.	Houston, TX

RUNNING BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
25	Bussey, Kendall	5-9/200	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
27	Clark, John	5-8/210	So.	Northbrook, IL
22	Etwi, Kwame	5-9/200	Sr.	Conroe, TX
12	Gillaspia, Cullen	6-2/235	Sr.	Katy, TX
37	Johnson, Marquez	5-9/186	So.	Pickton, TX
23	Kibodi, Jacob	6-2/220	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
89	Mellenbruch, Justin	6-1/235	Fr.	Austin, TX
28	Sanders, AJ	5-10/200	So.	The Woodlands, TX
5	Williams, Trayveon	5-9/200	Jr.	Houston, TX

RECEIVERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
2	Ausbon, Jhamon	6-2/220	So.	Houston, TX
42	Azakytu, Ke'undre	6-0/190	So.	Dallas, TX
33	Bean, Justice	5-11/185	So.	Frankston, TX
30	Boykin, Andrew	6-1/180	Fr.	Austin, TX
14	Buckley, Camron	6-2/190	So.	Cedar Hill, TX
16	Chriss, Klyde	6-0/175	So.	New Orleans, LA
1	Davis, Quartney	6-2/200	So.	Houston, TX
40	Gunnell, Will	5-11/180	Fr.	Houston, TX
15	Hansford, Aaron	6-3/240	So.	Washington, DC
9	Jones, Hezekiah	5-11/194	So.	Stafford, TX
82	Kirchner, Matthew	6-2/205	Jr.	Plano, TX
6	Paul, Roshauud	6-0/180	So.	Bremond, TX
84	Reynolds, Moses	6-2/200	So.	San Antonio, TX
13	Rogers, Kendrick	6-3/210	So.	Frankston, TX

TIGHT ENDS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
47	Groff, Jacob	6-2/196	Fr.	San Antonio, TX
85	Horry, Camron	6-5/270	Fr.	Katy, TX
88	McZeal, Keynel	6-2/235	Fr.	Port Neches, TX
31	Rawlins, Gannon	6-3/230	So.	Galveston, TX
46	Renick, Ryan	6-2/233	So.	Iola, TX
87	Shetler, Greer	6-4/225	Jr.	San Antonio, TX
81	Sternberger, Jace	6-4/250	Jr.	Kingfisher, OK

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
51	Anderson, Riley	6-5/295	So.	Mineola, TX
63	Baldree, Cagan	6-4/285	So.	Carthage, TX
72	Blanton, Colten	6-7/285	Fr.	Cypress, TX
66	Congel, Robert	6-3/315	So.	Greenwood Village, CO
74	Diesch, Kellen	6-5/310	So.	Trophy Club, TX
68	Dworaczyk, Justin	6-6/280	Jr.	Houston, TX
54	Green, Carson	6-6/300	So.	Southlake, TX
73	Hocker, Jared	6-5/318	So.	N. Richland Hills, TX
70	Lanfear, Connor	6-6/320	Sr.	Buda, TX
75	Martin, Koda	6-6/310	Sr.	Manvel, TX
77	McCollum, Ryan	6-5/295	So.	Spring, TX
64	McCoy, Erik	6-4/315	Jr.	Lufkin, TX
65	Moore Jr., Dan	6-5/317	So.	Beaumont, TX
76	Prater, Colton	6-4/300	Jr.	Bossier City, LA
71	Reed, Grayson	6-5/320	Fr.	Cypress, TX
78	Sutherland, Keaton	6-5/315	Sr.	Flower Mound, TX
69	Talbert, Brayden	6-4/290	Jr.	Montgomery, TX

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
2	Clemons, Michael	6-5/265	Jr.	Garland, TX
46	Durham, Landis	6-3/255	Sr.	Plano, TX
94	Estes, Landry	6-2/280	Sr.	Trophy Club, TX
91	Grimes, K.J.	6-3/245	So.	College Station, TX
37	Howard, Mitchell	6-1/250	Jr.	Cypress, TX
3	Johnson, Tyree	6-4/250	Fr.	Washington, DC
88	Keke, Kingsley	6-4/305	Sr.	Richmond, TX
5	Mack, Daylon	6-1/320	Sr.	Gladewater, TX
95	Madubuike, Justin	6-3/300	So.	McKinney, TX
90	Moton, TD	6-3/305	So.	Shreveport, LA
93	Peevy, Jayden	6-6/300	So.	Bellaire, TX
33	Robinson, Ondario	6-3/265	Fr.	Hutto, TX
99	Rogers, Josh	6-5/306	Fr.	Houston, TX

LINEBACKERS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
42	Alaka, Otaro	6-3/240	Sr.	Houston, TX
25	Dodson, Tyrel	6-2/242	Jr.	Franklin, TN
35	Garner, Riley	6-3/220	Sr.	College Station, TX
19	Hines III, Anthony	6-3/230	So.	Plano, TX
7	Johnson, Buddy	6-2/225	So.	Dallas, TX
50	Labhart, Mac	6-0/225	Sr.	Dallas, TX
53	Locke, John	6-2/204	So.	Richmond, TX
56	Magee II, Keeath	6-0/225	So.	Houston, TX
32	Marchiol, Santino	6-1/229	Fr.	Centennial, CO
48	Sargent, Mason	6-2/230	Jr.	Leonard, TX
41	Wagner, Mark	6-1/200	Fr.	College Station, TX
58	White, Braden	5-11/220	So.	Florence, AL

DEFENSIVE BACKS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
26	Capers-Smith, Deshawn	6-0/200	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
14	Carper, Keldrick	6-2/198	So.	Plain Dealing, LA
22	Chattman, Clifford	6-5/195	So.	New Orleans, LA
27	Elam, Roney	6-2/192	Jr.	Newton, TX
28	Fuller, Travon	6-1/173	So.	Athens, TX
18	Howard, Antonio	5-10/195	Jr.	Miami, FL
10	Jones, Myles	6-4/185	So.	Magnolia, TX
17	Morris, Devin	6-1/195	Fr.	Caldwell, TX
20	Okeke, Ikenna	6-3/215	So.	Smyrna, TN
21	Oliver, Charles	6-2/202	Jr.	Fairfield, TX
13	Prendergast, Cade	6-3/190	Fr.	Prosper, TX
11	Pryor, Larry	6-0/212	Jr.	Sulphur Springs, TX
29	Renfro, Debione	6-2/193	So.	Pearland, TX
24	Saunders, David	5-10/204	Fr.	Cedar Hill, TX
16	Siverand, Kemah	6-1/200	Jr.	Cypress, TX
4	Tucker, Derrick	6-1/200	So.	Manvel, TX
6	Wilson, Donovan	6-1/207	Sr.	Shreveport, LA

SPECIALISTS		HT/WT	CL	HOMETOWN
45	Frey, Austin (LS)	6-1/220	Sr.	Tomball, TX
36	LaCamera, Daniel (K)	6-4/230	Sr.	Tarpon Springs, FL
34	Mann, Braden (P/K)	5-11/190	Jr.	Houston, TX
39	Pagel, Jake (LS)	6-2/212	Fr.	Dallas, TX
38	Riethman, Drew (K)	6-0/195	So.	Fort Worth, TX

SCOUTING THE AGGIES

Opposing Coaches Size up Texas A&M

"I'll tell you what, if Jimbo (Fisher) thinks the media was too harsh on him at FSU, wait until he finishes fourth again in the West. It's going to be a process there. When you recruit, you're looking for guys who want to work and want to be coached. To me, it just looked like those players weren't having fun on Saturdays and didn't take too well to coaching. That's what we talk about when we say a 'culture change.' Jimbo has a big one in front of him. ... It's not talent; they've got dudes on that team. Sometimes you just need to hear a different voice. Jimbo's will be unlike anything they've heard in a while there. He'll rattle some cages. ... Jimbo can coach quarterbacks. Look at the NFL Draft if you don't think so. The question is, who is his next project? I like what (Nick) Starkel did last year. He was solid and safe for the most part. But do you want solid and safe, or something more? Can Jimbo get Kellen Mond ready to play? ... I like Jhamon Ausbon. He's the real deal. Whoever wins the quarterback job will have a legit threat with (Ausbon). That's one area where the previous staff really struggled: getting the most out of a group of talented wide receivers. The quarterbacks, despite those big rankings, didn't develop, and that impacted the receivers. In a couple of years, we're all going to watch Christian Kirk as a star in the NFL and wonder how he wasn't used more in college."

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 SEC

Sept.	3	at UCLA	L	44-45
Sept.	9	Nicholls	W	24-14
Sept.	16	UL Lafayette	W	45-21
Sept.	23	vs. Arkansas #	(ot) W	50-43
Sept.	30	South Carolina	W	24-17
Oct.	7	Alabama	L	19-27
Oct.	14	at Florida	W	19-17
Oct.	28	Mississippi State	L	14-35
Nov.	4	Auburn	L	27-42
Nov.	11	New Mexico	W	55-14
Nov.	18	at Ole Miss	W	31-24
Nov.	25	at LSU	L	21-45
Dec.	29	vs. Wake Forest %	L	52-55

#Arlington %Belk Bowl



LANDIS DURHAM

2017 INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING	ATT	COMP	YDS	TD	INT
Nick Starkel	**205**	**123**	**1,793**	**14**	**6**
Kellen Mond	**227**	**117**	**1,375**	**8**	**6**

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
Trayveon Williams	**173**	**798**	**4.6**	**8**
Keith Ford	139	548	3.9	12
Kellen Mond	**89**	**340**	**3.8**	**3**
Kendall Bussey	**47**	**239**	**5.1**	**1**

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	AVG	TD
Christian Kirk	71	919	12.9	10
Jhamon Ausbon	**50**	**571**	**11.4**	**3**
Damion Ratley	30	694	23.1	6
Trayveon Williams	**20**	**192**	**9.6**	**0**

KICKING: **Daniel LaCamera, 18-21 FGs, 51-52 PATs, 105 points**

TACKLES: **Tyrel Dodson, 105;** Armani Watts, 86

SACKS: **Landis Durham, 10.5**

INTERCEPTIONS: Armani Watts, 4

Returning Players in **Bold**

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	SEC	NATIONAL
Scoring	32.7 ppg	6	34
Rushing	155.6 ypg	10	78
Passing	251.2 ypg	3	47
Total	406.8 ypg	8	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	30.7 ppg	10	87
Rushing	170.8 ypg	9	71
Passing	237.6 ypg	11	85
Total	408.5 ypg	9	78
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**SEC**	**NATIONAL**
+3	+0.23	5	46

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

A TIGHT SPOT Tight end has been something of a forgotten position at Texas A&M. Coach Jimbo Fisher is offering a reminder, though. "Those tight ends may not have 80 or 90 catches, but they're going to have 30, 40, 50 catches," he said in the spring. "It's how they get them … big third downs, red zones, to keep drives alive. There's so many nuances for a tight end and how he's going to get open." A tight end with a 30-catch season might like a modest goal, but not at A&M. No A&M tight end has had more than 14 catches since Jamie McCoy had 35 in 2009. In the last six seasons, nine A&M tight ends combined for just 36 catches.

THE 400 CLUB Though injured most of his freshman season, Nick Starkel still exceeded 400 passing yards in two games. That puts him in select company. He's already tied with Kenny Hill, Ryan Tannehill and Jerrod Johnson for the second-most 400-yard passing games in A&M history. Johnny Manziel threw for 400 yards or more five times.

AIMING HIGH Texas A&M Chancellor John Sharp didn't mince words last November when asked what was expected of a new football coach. "Nothing serious … we just want to win the national championship," Sharp said. A few days later, Jimbo Fisher was announced as A&M's next coach. A&M is so confident that Fisher can deliver its first national title since 1939 that he was given a 10-year, $75 million contract. A couple months later, Sharp also gave Fisher an undated national championship plaque. What was meant as a light-hearted show of support became a source of derision from A&M rivals. That never deterred Sharp, though. "Gone are the days when we settle for a good football team," he says. "We expect to compete soon for championships."

SHOW THE WAY A&M's coaching staff is teeming with national championship experience. Fisher was head coach for Florida State's 2013 championship team and offensive coordinator for LSU in 2003. Other coaches who were on national championship staffs: tight ends coach Tim Brewster and running backs coach Jay Graham (Florida State '13), linebackers coach Bradley Dale Peveto (LSU '07) and strength and conditioning coach Jerry Schmidt (Florida '96 and Oklahoma '00). Receivers coach Dameyune Craig was on the Auburn staff that lost to Florida State in '13.

CONFIDENCE IS HIGH Junior linebacker Tyrel Dodson anticipates that A&M's linebacker corps will be significantly improved. Actually, he thinks A&M's linebackers will be the best in the nation. Dodson expressed as much when he tweeted: "I don't say this a lot … but we will have the best linebacker corps in the country." Skeptics would say that the boast is too ambitious. But the Aggies do project to field their best linebackers probably since 2010. Dodson and senior Otaro Alaka are returning starters. Sophomores Buddy Johnson and Anthony Hines were impressive in their debut seasons. Redshirt freshman Santino Marchiol had a strong spring.



TYREL DODSON

ADVANCED STATS

5 Factors: College Football's Most Important Stats

Field Position[1]		**Rank**
Offense	29.6	72
Defense	29.3	61
Margin	**+0.3**	**61**
Efficiency[2]		**Rank**
Offense	38.5%	107
Defense	40.7%	63
Margin	**-2.2%**	**86**
Explosiveness[3]		**Rank**
Offense	5.5	75
Defense	5.6	68
Margin	**-0.1**	**75**
Finishing Drives[4]		**Rank**
Offense	4.8	32
Defense	4.7	90
Margin	**+0.1**	**62**
Adjusted TO Margin[5]		**Rank**
Projected	-0.6	74
Actual	+3	45
Margin	**+3.6**	**32**

NUMBERS TO KNOW

KEY: **1**-Average starting field position by yard line; **2**-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); **3**-Explosiveness=yards per play; **4**-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; **5**-TO margin accounting for "luck" • Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

32.6

Goal No. 1: Re-establish the ground game. Only 32.6 percent of A&M's non-sack carries gained 5.0 yards or more in 2017, 122nd in FBS and worst in the SEC. No other SEC West rival was below 38.8 percent. The run defense was above average in this regard (35.8 percent, 50th in FBS), but the Aggies were still at a major disadvantage on the ground.

128.3

Despite playing with two freshman quarterbacks (Nick Starkel and Kellen Mond), A&M's passer rating actually rose slightly in 2017, from 127.5 to 128.3. Granted, that ranked only 76th in FBS, but it was still a decent accomplishment, all things considered.

-17.7

It took only a couple of bad bounces to do in the Aggies in 2017. When they had a turnover margin of even or better, they were 7–2, and when they didn't, they were 0–4. When they had a plus-1 margin or better, their scoring margin was plus-13.8 points per game. Zero or minus-1? Minus-1.0 points per game. Minus-2 or worse? Minus-17.7 points per game.

28.7

In the last six seasons, Mike Elko defenses have ranked no worse than 60th (S&P+), with an average ranking of 28.7. Texas A&M defenses in that span, however, have had an average ranking of 58.8 and have placed better than 39th just twice. Can Elko do what recent A&M defensive coordinators couldn't and sustain improvement?

Chris Covatta

2018 SIGNEES

The pass-oriented spread offense of Texas A&M's previous coaching regime did not provide all the necessary components for first-year coach Jimbo Fisher's pro-style system.

Fisher puts more emphasis on the running game, so upgrading a mediocre rushing attack was a priority in recruiting. He sought more physical linemen, more powerful running backs and more tight ends, practically a nonexistent position the last six seasons in College Station.

Fisher addressed those needs by signing tight ends Glenn Beal and Jace Sternberger, a junior college transfer, and four offensive linemen, including Luke Matthews — the fourth and final Matthews brother.

Fisher also added three running backs — two from Florida — and quarterback James Foster from Montgomery, Ala.

"I think we met most of our needs," Fisher said on Signing Day. "We're always looking for linemen. A huge area of need was finding more tight ends. We just didn't have enough to practice and do what we do. We had to have a quarterback in this class. That's one position that no one else can play. It was critical. And we needed more backs, just for the numbers to have the guys to run the ball."

Fisher's first A&M recruiting class was quite impressive, and not just because he appeared to fill some needs for the running game. He had almost an entirely new staff recruiting in a different area, and several top prospects were already claimed elsewhere in the early signing period.

Fisher assembled a class ranked as high as 16th in the nation, which is very good for a first-year coach. Nick Saban's first class at Alabama and Urban Meyer's first class at Florida were both ranked 12th.

Perhaps most impressive, Fisher won three out of four head-to-head recruiting jousts with Saban on Signing Day by landing Beal, defensive lineman Bobby Brown and athlete Vernon Jackson.

The class was also boosted by adding heralded receiver Jalen Preston and safety Leon O'Neal, who chose A&M over Alabama and Clemson.

BY POSITION	
Defensive Linemen	5
Offensive Linemen	4
Running Backs	3
Wide Receivers	3
Defensive Backs	3
Tight Ends	2
Quarterbacks	1
Athletes	1
Specialists	1
BY STATE	
Texas	15
Alabama	2
Florida	2
California	1
Louisiana	1
Oklahoma	1
Ontario	1

Recruit Spotlight

Tyree Wilson

DE • New London, TX

The tiny East Texas town of New London certainly qualifies as the rough. A&M is optimistic that little-known defensive end prospect Tyree Wilson will be the diamond.

At 6'6", 230 pounds and with 4.6 speed, he certainly has the physical attributes to be a gem. He just hasn't had those attributes for long.

Wilson is the very definition of a late bloomer. He had grown to just 5'11" as 15-year-old freshman. He grew seven inches over the next three years.

However, he was extremely thin. That is, until the spring of his junior year.

"We noticed within a week the weights he was pushing around," says John Frazier, Wilson's coach at West Rusk High School. "He was lifting a lot more weight than usual. When we were out doing agility drills he looked like he was in control of his body. We saw it within a week. He carried on from there."

Indeed, he did. He posted 126 tackles, including 38 for a loss, and forced five fumbles.

Wilson committed to A&M before his senior year. But he had second thoughts after Jimbo Fisher took over as head coach. He was concerned that Fisher wasn't interested. He needn't have worried.

"Tyree Wilson is one of the most interesting guys we signed," Fisher says. "His length and size ... big people do a lot more by accident than a lot of people do on purpose. He's maturing in a hurry. He gained 14 pounds in three weeks between visits. He's a very, very interesting guy that I think could end up being a really, really good player."

Name	Pos	Ht/Wt	Hometown	247	ESPN	Rivals	Nat. Rank
Glenn Beal	TE	6-5/265	New Orleans, LA	★★★	★★★	★★★	603
Colten Blanton	OT	6-7/285	Cypress, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	153
Bobby Brown	DT	6-4/282	Arlington, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	182
Caleb Chapman	WR	6-5/210	Friendswood, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	354
Barton Clement	OG	6-3/315	Missouri City, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	381
Jashaun Corbin	RB	6-0/191	Rockledge, FL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	261
Mohamed Diallo	DT	6-4/320	Toronto, ON	★★★	★★★★	★★★	57*
James Foster	QB	6-3/210	Montgomery, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	271
Vernon Jackson	ATH	6-3/240	Boling, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	358
Tank Jenkins	OG	6-3/325	Montgomery, AL	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	253
Brian Johnson	S	6-2/185	Manvel, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	629
Jeremiah Martin	DE	6-5/240	San Bernardino, CA	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	254
Luke Matthews	OG	6-4/305	Missouri City, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	368
Jordan Moore	S	5-11/192	Yoakum, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	225
Leon O'Neal Jr.	S	6-1/190	Cypress, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	75
Montel Parker	WR	6-2/185	Dickinson, TX	★★★	★★★★	★★★	389
Jalen Preston	WR	6-2/212	Manvel, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	95
Deneric Prince	RB	6-1/196	Manvel, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	1,211
Seth Small	K/P	5-11/190	Katy, TX	★★★	★★★	★★	1,959
Jace Sternberger	TE	6-4/240	Kingfisher, OK	★★★	★★★★	★★★	36*
Charles Strong	RB	6-1/220	Lake Butler, FL	★★★	★★★★	★★★	614
Tyree Wilson	DE	6-6/230	New London, TX	★★★	★★★	★★★	472
Max Wright	DE	6-4/270	Katy, TX	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	190

*junior college transfer

AAC PREVIEW

East	Predicted Order of Finish	West
1 UCF **KNIGHTS** 10-3, 7-1		1 MEMPHIS **TIGERS** 9-4, 6-2
2 TEMPLE **OWLS** 7-5, 5-3		2 NAVY **MIDSHIPMEN** 9-4, 5-3
3 USF **BULLS** 8-4, 5-3		3 HOUSTON **COUGARS** 7-5, 5-3
4 CINCINNATI **BEARCATS** 4-8, 3-5		4 TULANE **GREEN WAVE** 6-6, 4-4
5 CONNECTICUT **HUSKIES** 3-9, 1-7		5 SMU **MUSTANGS** 6-6, 4-4
6 EAST CAROLINA **PIRATES** 2-10, 1-7		6 TULSA **GOLDEN HURRICANE** 4-8, 2-6

AAC Championship: **UCF over Memphis**

2018 Bowl Projections

Birmingham Bowl
UCF vs. UCLA
Bahamas Bowl
Memphis vs. FAU
Armed Forces Bowl
Houston vs. Kansas State
Military Bowl
Navy vs. Boston College
Cure Bowl
Temple vs. Appalachian State
Gasparilla Bowl
USF vs. Army
Frisco Bowl
Tulane vs. Toledo

2018 Unit Rankings

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CINCINNATI	8	8	11	11	6	7	11
CONNECTICUT	11	11	8	12	11	11	9
EAST CAROLINA	12	12	7	10	10	12	12
HOUSTON	4	10	9	6	1	4	3
MEMPHIS	7	1	2	1	5	3	4
NAVY	2	9	12	5	4	9	8
SMU	5	2	10	9	9	6	7
TEMPLE	6	4	4	7	3	1	5
TULANE	3	6	6	8	8	10	6
TULSA	10	5	5	4	12	8	10
UCF	1	3	1	2	7	2	1
USF	9	7	3	3	2	5	2

PRESEASON ALL-AAC TEAM

First-Team Offense

QB	McKenzie Milton	5-11	185	Jr.	UCF
RB	Shamari Brooks	5-9	185	So.	Tulsa
RB	Darrell Henderson	5-9	200	Jr.	Memphis
AP	Adrian Killins	5-8	158	Jr.	UCF
WR	Trevon Brown	6-2	211	Sr.	East Carolina
WR	Dredrick Snelson	6-0	206	Jr.	UCF
TE	Joey Magnifico	6-4	235	Jr.	Memphis
C	Jordan Johnson	6-2	320	Jr.	UCF
OL	Tyler Bowling	6-6	325	Sr.	Tulsa
OL	Wyatt Miller	6-4	306	Sr.	UCF
OL	Marcus Norman	6-6	301	Jr.	USF
OL	Trevon Tate	6-4	295	Sr.	Memphis

First-Team Defense

DL	Marquise Copeland	6-2	285	Sr.	Cincinnati
DL	Trysten Hill	6-2	330	Jr.	UCF
DL	Ed Oliver	6-3	290	Jr.	Houston
DL	Greg Reaves	6-2	248	Jr.	USF
LB	Curtis Akins	6-2	235	Sr.	Memphis
LB	Shaun Bradley	6-1	225	Jr.	Temple
LB	Pat Jasinski	6-1	233	Sr.	UCF
CB	T.J. Carter	5-11	180	So.	Memphis
CB	Jordan Wyatt	6-0	195	Sr.	SMU
S	Kyle Gibson	5-11	182	Sr.	UCF
S	Delvon Randall	6-1	215	Sr.	Temple

First-Team Specialists

K	Matthew Wright	6-0	179	Sr.	UCF
P	James Smith	6-5	225	So.	Cincinnati
KR	Tony Pollard	6-0	208	Jr.	Memphis
PR	Isaiah Wright	6-2	220	Jr.	Temple

Second-Team Offense

QB	Malcolm Perry	5-9	185	Jr.	Navy
RB	Ryquell Armstead	5-11	215	Sr.	Temple
RB	Xavier Jones	5-10	203	Jr.	SMU
AP	Patrick Taylor	6-3	223	Jr.	Memphis
WR	Justin Hobbs	6-4	218	Sr.	Tulsa
WR	James Proche	5-11	185	Jr.	SMU
TE	Mitchell Wilcox	6-5	245	Jr.	USF
C	Chandler Miller	6-3	293	Sr.	Tulsa
OL	Josh Jones	6-5	303	Jr.	Houston
OL	Drew Kyser	6-5	300	Sr.	Memphis
OL	Will Noble	6-4	297	Sr.	Houston
OL	Andrew Wood	6-4	290	Sr.	Navy

Second-Team Defense

DL	Cortez Broughton	6-3	288	Sr.	Cincinnati
DL	O'Bryan Goodson	6-1	300	So.	Memphis
DL	Jarvis Polu	6-3	292	Sr.	Navy
DL	Quincy Roche	6-4	235	So.	Temple
LB	Khalid McGee	5-10	199	Sr.	USF
LB	Kyran Mitchell	6-0	225	Sr.	SMU
LB	Perry Young	6-0	215	Jr.	Cincinnati
CB	Ronnie Hoggins	5-8	177	Sr.	USF
CB	Donnie Lewis	6-0	195	Sr.	Tulane
S	McKinley Whitfield	6-3	216	Sr.	Tulsa
S	Sean Williams	6-1	190	Sr.	Navy

Second-Team Specialists

K	Caden Novikoff	5-10	190	Sr.	Houston
P	Dane Roy	6-7	240	Jr.	Houston
KR	Michael Warren	5-11	218	So.	Cincinnati
PR	John Williams	5-9	172	Jr.	Memphis

Cincinnati Bearcats

National Forecast: **96** • AAC East Prediction: **4** • Projected Record: **4-8, 3-5 AAC**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	at UCLA
Sept.	8	Miami (Ohio) #
Sept.	15	Alabama A&M
Sept.	22	Ohio
Sept.	29	at Connecticut
Oct.	6	Tulane
Oct.	20	at Temple
Oct.	27	at SMU
Nov.	3	Navy
Nov.	10	South Florida
Nov.	17	at UCF
Nov.	23	East Carolina

#Paul Brown Stadium

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 AAC

Aug.	31	Austin Peay	W	26-14
Sept.	9	at Michigan	L	14-36
Sept.	16	at Miami (Ohio)	W	21-17
Sept.	23	at Navy	L	32-42
Sept.	30	Marshall	L	21-38
Oct.	7	UCF	L	23-51
Oct.	14	at South Florida	L	3-33
Oct.	21	SMU (ot)	L	28-31
Nov.	4	at Tulane	W	17-16
Nov.	10	Temple	L	24-35
Nov.	18	at East Carolina	L	20-48
Nov.	25	Connecticut	W	22-21

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Leonard Taylor, TE, Springfield, OH
2. Tavion Thomas, RB, Dayton, OH
3. Josh Whyle, TE, Cincinnati, OH
4. Malik Vann, DE, Fairfield, OH
5. Meechi Harris, WR, Xenia, OH
6. Arquon Bush, CB, Euclid, OH
7. Ben Bryant, QB, La Grange, IL
8. Lorenz Metz, DL, Germany
9. Charles McClelland, RB, Homerville, GA
10. Myjai Sanders, DE, Kingsland, GA

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	20.9 ppg	12	111
Rushing	135.3 ypg	11	100
Passing	216.4 ypg	9	74
Total	351.8 ypg	12	101
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	31.8 ppg	7	93
Rushing	192.4 ypg	8	95
Passing	236.1 ypg	5	80
Total	428.5 ypg	6	95
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
-5	-0.42	10	97

STAT CORNER

43

According to the 247Sports Composite, Cincinnati has brought aboard 43 three- or four-star recruits in the last two signing periods.

OFFENSE Coach Luke Fickell saw his inaugural Bearcats team rank just 111th nationally in scoring offense last year. Offensive coordinator Mike Denbrock will retain his post but will now coach tight ends after handling quarterbacks last season. Former running backs coach Gino Guidugli, who still holds several UC passing records, is now coaching quarterbacks.

Senior quarterback Hayden Moore is the incumbent. The streaky Moore last season completed 239-of-424 passes (56.4 percent) for 2,562 yards, with 20 touchdown passes and nine interceptions.

Running back Gerrid Doaks led UC in rushing with 513 yards on a healthy 5.9-yard average. Doaks missed the final few games with a shoulder injury but appears ready for 2018. Sophomore Michael Warren II showed some flash last year with 324 yards.

Top wide receiver Kahlil Lewis returns for his senior year. Lewis led UC last season with 61 catches for 676 yards and seven touchdowns. No other returning receiver caught more than 29 passes.

The offensive line is a real concern, with only two returning starters and a shortage of upperclassmen.

DEFENSE The Bearcats allowed at least 31 points eight times last year, losing each time. A lack of offense didn't help, but the UC defense often had trouble getting off the field. The Bearcats ranked 100th nationally in third-down conversion defense, allowing opponents to convert on 43.3 percent of their attempts.

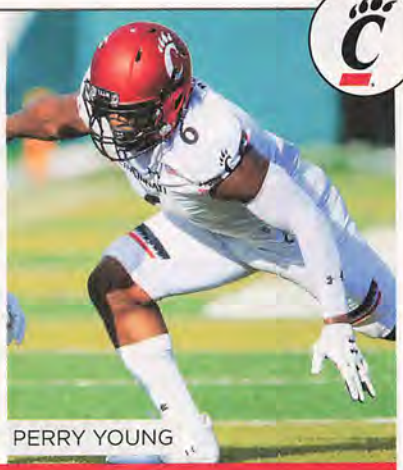
UC does have two stalwart defensive tackles in seniors Marquise Copeland and Cortez Broughton. Copeland was honorable mention All-AAC last season, while Broughton earned second-team all-league honors in 2016.

The lack of a pass rush has been a problem for many years, as UC has been unable to find consistent edge rushers. UC ranked only 123rd nationally last year in sacks, with 1.0 per game. Copeland, an interior lineman, led the team with 3.5 sacks.

Junior Will linebacker Perry Young is UC's top returning tackler with 101 last year. UC will have some new faces in the secondary, which has lacked playmakers. The Bearcats intercepted only five passes last year, tied for 119th nationally. Senior safeties Chris Murphy and Tyrell Gilbert, both part-time starters last year, are among the top returnees.

SPECIALISTS Punter James Smith, a native of Australia, was Cincinnati's lone first-team All-AAC selection in 2017 as a true freshman. The Bearcats ranked 15th nationally with a net average of 41.0 yards per punt. Placekicking has been erratic and largely unproductive the past two years, with the job changing hands several times. Freshman Cole Smith is the frontrunner for that position. The coverage and return teams have been longtime issues for UC, which has had no special teams return touchdowns since 2011.

FINAL ANALYSIS With a shortage of stars, and a coaching staff in Year 2 of a rebuilding project, a .500 record might be the best the Bearcats can hope for this season. UC has gone 8–16 during the past two years, but things appear brighter for the long term. Multiple recruiting services rated the 2018 UC class No. 1 in the AAC and tops among Group of 5 schools. "It shows us that we're recruiting in the right way," Fickell says. "You continue to take those swings and you see them pay off. They'll pay off for the next three, four or five years."



PERRY YOUNG

"You have to talk about their recruiting class first and foremost, because their current staff didn't get what they needed to start fresh in terms of talent."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)					
WR	1	**Kahlil Lewis (Sr.)**	26	Jerron Rollins (Jr.)	
WR	17	Rashad Medaris (Jr.)	7	Javan Hawes (So.)	
WR	85	**Thomas Geddis (Jr.)**	35	Trent Cloud (Fr.)	
LT	73	Blake Yager (Jr.)	77	Vincent McConnell (Fr.)	
LG	72	**Garrett Campbell (Sr.)**	54	Keith Minor (Sr.)	
C	70	Jakari Robinson (Fr.)	60	Zach Byczynski (So.)	
RG	78	Morgan James (Jr.)	65	Cody Lamb (Fr.)	
RT	61	**Kyle Trout (Sr.)**	75	Chris Ferguson (Sr.)	
TE	83	Josiah Deguara (Jr.)	82	Wilson Huber (Fr.)	
QB	8	**Hayden Moore (Sr.)**	9	Desmond Ridder (Fr.)	
RB	23	Gerrid Doaks (So.)	3	Michael Warren II (So.)	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	48	**Kevin Mouhon (Sr.)**	19	Ethan Tucky (So.)	
DT	96	**Cortez Broughton (Sr.)**	99	Marcus Brown (So.)	
DT	44	**Marquise Copeland (Sr.)**	92	Curtis Brooks (So.)	
DE	51	Kimoni Fitz (Sr.)	43	Michael Pitts (So.)	
WLB	6	**Perry Young (Jr.)**	40	Ty Sponseller (So.)	
MLB	41	Joel Dublanko (So.)	95	Bryan Wright (Jr.)	
SLB	4	Malik Clements (Sr.)	8	Jarell White (So.)	
CB	25	Coby Bryant (So.)	24	Noah Hamlin (Fr.)	
CB	12	TJ Johnson (So.)	10	Christian Anguto (Jr.)	
S	30	**Chris Murphy (Sr.)**	32	James Wiggins (So.)	
S	2	**Tyrell Gilbert (Sr.)**	16	Darrick Forrest (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Cole Smith (Fr.)	**KR**	3 Michael Warren (So.)	
P	37	James Smith (So.)	**PR**	7 Javan Hawes (So.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hayden Moore, 424-239-2,562-9, 20 TDs
Rushing: Gerrid Doaks, 87 att., 513 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Kahlil Lewis, 61 rec., 676 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Perry Young, 101
Sacks: Marquise Copeland, 3.5
Interceptions: Malik Clements, 1; Bryan Wright, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Luke Fickell
Record at School: 4-8 (1 year)
Career Record: 10-15 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Mike Denbrock
Defensive Coordinator: Marcus Freeman
Cincinnati, OH • Nippert Stadium (40,000)

AP

Memphis Tigers

National Forecast: **38** • AAC West Prediction: **1** • Projected Record: **9-4, 6-2 AAC**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Mercer
Sept.	8	at Navy
Sept.	14	Georgia State
Sept.	22	South Alabama
Sept.	28	at Tulane
Oct.	6	Connecticut
Oct.	13	UCF
Oct.	20	at Missouri
Nov.	3	at East Carolina
Nov.	10	Tulsa
Nov.	16	at SMU
Nov.	23	Houston

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 AAC

Aug.	31	UL Monroe	W	37-29
Sept.	16	UCLA	W	48-45
Sept.	23	Southern Illinois	W	44-31
Sept.	30	at UCF	L	13-40
Oct.	6	at Connecticut	W	70-31
Oct.	14	Navy	W	30-27
Oct.	19	at Houston	W	42-38
Oct.	27	Tulane	W	56-26
Nov.	3	at Tulsa	W	41-14
Nov.	18	SMU	W	66-45
Nov.	25	East Carolina	W	70-13
Dec.	2	at UCF #	(ot) L	55-62
Dec.	30	vs. Iowa State %	L	20-21

#AAC Championship %Liberty Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Antonio Gibson, WR, Stockbridge, GA*
2. Keith Brigham, DE, Normal, IL*
3. Troy Hurst, ATH, Greensburg, LA
4. Nigel Brannon, OT, Oklahoma City, OK
5. Will Lawrence, OG, Memphis, TN
6. Titus Jones, OG, New Orleans, LA
7. Kenny Gainwell, ATH, Yazoo City, MS
8. Quindell Johnson, S, New Orleans, LA
9. Jaylon Allen, OLB, Humble, TX
10. Brady McBride, QB, Coppell, TX

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	45.5 ppg	2	2
Rushing	197.1 ypg	6	34
Passing	335.0 ypg	1	7
Total	532.1 ypg	1	4
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	32.5 ppg	8	102
Rushing	184.2 ypg	6	85
Passing	282.1 ypg	10	122
Total	466.2 ypg	8	117
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+15	+1.15	2	3

STAT CORNER

42.9

Through interceptions or breakups, Memphis was responsible for 42.9% of its opponents' incomplete passes, sixth in FBS.

OFFENSE A program that has benefited from five years of stellar quarterback play must find a successor to Riley Ferguson, who was a record-setting replacement two years ago for first-round NFL Draft pick Paxton Lynch. Sophomore David Moore, Ferguson's backup last season, will be a strong candidate to lead the Tigers and coach Mike Norvell to a fifth straight postseason appearance. Moore is a dual threat whose running ability may separate him from a pack that includes Brady White and Brady Davis. He also has the strongest arm.

The Tigers will be stocked in the backfield, where 1,000-yard rusher Darrell Henderson returns along with Patrick Taylor. The speedy Henderson ran for 1,154 yards to become the program's first 1,000-yard rusher in eight years, while the bruising Taylor added 866 yards and 13 touchdowns, the most among the backs.

Memphis lost nearly 2,000 receiving yards with the departures of Anthony Miller and Phil Mayhue, but Louisiana natives Damonte Coxie and John "Pop" Williams should step up after displaying their talents last season. Coxie, 6'3" and 200 pounds, is the stat leader among the returning wideouts (21 catches for 323 yards).

The offensive line returns four starters, led by left tackle Trevon Tate, a first-team all-conference selection. Tate and center Drew Kyser are three-year starters.

DEFENSE Sophomore cornerback T.J. Carter leads the defense after a stellar season in which he earned multiple honors. Carter started 13 games and set a school record for interceptions by a freshman with five. He also had 11 pass breakups and two fumble recoveries, including one on the first snap of his career.

Senior Curtis Akins and junior Austin Hall, the team's top two tacklers, will lead the linebacking corps, along with sophomore Tim Hart, who emerged as a playmaker last season. The Tigers could get a boost from the return of oft-injured Jackson Dillon, who is hoping for a sixth season of eligibility after missing most of the past two seasons. If he's back, the Tigers gain a pass-rushing presence and disruptive force.

Up front, the Tigers return a productive trio in sophomores O'Bryan Goodson and Joseph Dorceus and junior Jonathan Wilson. They combined for 14 tackles for a loss.

To prosper, the Tigers must improve their overall play on defense after ranking 117th in the nation last year, allowing 466.2 yards per game.

SPECIALISTS Junior Tony Pollard is one of the nation's best return men. He had four kickoff returns for touchdowns last season to boost his career total to six, one shy of the NCAA record. The most competitive battle in the spring may have been for the punting job. After losing two effective veterans from last season, the Tigers turn to redshirt freshman Adam Williams and junior Aidan Daily.

FINAL ANALYSIS Memphis' upward trend continued in 2017. The Tigers won 10 games, played in the AAC title game and appeared in a bowl game for the fourth straight season — a first for the program. They were also ranked in the AP Top 25 every week beginning in mid-October. To maintain the momentum, Norvell must find the proper triggerman, since the Tigers will have an experienced offensive line and depth in the backfield to counter the loss of Miller and Mayhue. Defensively, the Tigers must overcome some alarming numbers and continue to win the turnover battle after ranking third nationally in that category a year ago at plus-1.15 per game.



DARRELL HENDERSON

"They're obviously going to have a drop-off replacing Riley Ferguson, but we don't expect it to be steep. They have been recruiting and developing at a high level."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)					
WR	9	John Williams (Jr.)	1	Tony Pollard (Jr.)	
WR	10	Damonte Coxie (So.)	14	Antonio Gibson (Jr.)	
WR	13	Kedarian Jones (Jr.)	81	Mechane Slade (Jr.)	
LT	**72**	**Trevon Tate (Sr.)**	77	Obinna Eze (Fr.)	
LG	56	Dylan Parham (Fr.)	75	Tau Ho Ching (Jr.)	
C	**54**	**Drew Kyser (Sr.)**	64	Daly Cull (Fr.)	
RG	**53**	**Dustin Woodard (Jr.)**	63	Ryan Young (So.)	
RT	**66**	**Roger Joseph (Sr.)**	49	Scottie Dill (Jr.)	
TE	**86**	**Joey Magnifico (Jr.)**	**5**	**Sean Dykes (Jr.)**	
QB	2	David Moore (So.)	3	Brady White (Jr.)	
RB	**8**	**Darrell Henderson (Jr.)**	**1**	**Tony Pollard (Jr.)**	
DEFENSE (8)					
DE	93	Desmond Hawkins (Jr.)	92	Jeremiah Maclin (Jr.)	
DT	97	Emmanuel Cooper (Sr.)	**38**	**Jonathan Wilson (Jr.)**	
NT	**1**	**O'Bryan Goodson (So.)**	94	Joseph Dorceus (So.)	
KAT	34	Jackson Dillon (Sr.)	23	JJ Russell (So.)	
LB	**7**	**Curtis Akins (Sr.)**	3	Keith Brown Jr. (Jr.)	
LB	**35**	**Tim Hart (So.)**	55	Bryce Huff (Jr.)	
STAR	**25**	**Austin Hall (Jr.)**	40	Thomas Pickens (So.)	
CB	**24**	**Tito Windham (Sr.)**	22	Tyrez Lindsey (So.)	
CB	**2**	**T.J. Carter (So.)**	16	Nehemiah Augustus (So.)	
S	**4**	**Josh Perry (So.)**	41	Sanchez Blake Jr. (Fr.)	
S	12	La'Andre Thomas (So.)	29	Carlito Gonzalez (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	36	Riley Patterson (So.)	**KR**	1 Tony Pollard (Jr.)	
P	48	Adam Williams (Fr.)	**PR**	9 John Williams (Jr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: David Moore, 10-7-63-0, 1 TD
Rushing: Darrell Henderson, 130 att., 1,154 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Tony Pollard, 36 rec., 536 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Curtis Akins, 88
Sacks: Bryce Huff, 2.0; Jonathan Wilson, 2.0
Interceptions: T.J. Carter, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Norvell
Record at School: 18-8 (2 years)
Career Record: 18-8 (2 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Kenny Dillingham
Defensive Coordinator: Chris Ball
Memphis, TN • Liberty Bowl (56,862)

Joe Murphy/University of Memphis

Tulane **Green Wave**

National Forecast: **90** • AAC West Prediction: **4** • Projected Record: **6-6, 4-4 AAC**

2018 SCHEDULE

Aug.	30	Wake Forest
Sept.	8	Nicholls
Sept.	15	at UAB
Sept.	22	at Ohio State
Sept.	28	Memphis
Oct.	6	at Cincinnati
Oct.	20	SMU
Oct.	27	at Tulsa
Nov.	3	at South Florida
Nov.	10	East Carolina
Nov.	15	at Houston
Nov.	24	Navy

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 5-7, 3-5 AAC

Sept.	2	Grambling	W	43-14
Sept.	9	at Navy	L	21-23
Sept.	16	at Oklahoma	L	14-56
Sept.	23	Army	W	21-17
Oct.	7	Tulsa	W	62-28
Oct.	14	at FIU	L	10-23
Oct.	21	South Florida	L	28-34
Oct.	27	at Memphis	L	26-56
Nov.	4	Cincinnati	L	16-17
Nov.	11	at East Carolina (ot)	W	31-24
Nov.	18	Houston	W	20-17
Nov.	25	at SMU	L	38-41

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jeffery Johnson, DT, Brookhaven, MS
2. Dorian Camel, S, Baton Rouge, LA
3. Alfred Thomas, DT, Montgomery, AL
4. La'Dedric Jackson, OLB, Montgomery, AL
5. Juan Monjarres, DE, New Orleans, LA
6. Nik Hogan, OL, Flowood, MS
7. Jorien Vallien, WR, Alexandria, LA
8. Jason Swann, OT, Pembroke Pines, FL
9. Jamiran James, DT, New Orleans, LA
10. Larry Brooks, S, Kennedale, TX

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.5 ppg	8	74
Rushing	231.5 ypg	4	20
Passing	160.0 ypg	11	117
Total	391.5 ypg	10	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	29.2 ppg	6	84
Rushing	210.4 ypg	10	112
Passing	225.7 ypg	3	68
Total	436.1 ypg	7	99
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+8	+0.67	4	20

STAT CORNER

-20

Tulane's point differential was minus-199 in 2015 but minus-43 in Willie Fritz's first year and minus-20 in 2017. Solid growth.

Tulane Athletics

OFFENSE Look for a productive offense that finally meets coach Willie Fritz's expectations after a pair of frustrating building years. Along the way, the notion of his relying on a one-dimensional, ground-bound approach will become a relic of the past. Dual-threat quarterback Jonathan Banks threw for 565 yards in the final two games of 2017, leading an upset of Houston and a near-upset of SMU. Banks picked up where he left off in the spring. It helps tremendously that he is playing in the same system for the first time after one-year stints at Kansas State and two junior colleges.

Another plus is his rapport with returning wide receivers Terren Encalade (39 catches, 730 yards), Darnell Mooney (34, 599) and Jabril Clewis.

The running game, which averaged 231.5 yards, should be fine despite the loss of 1,000-yard rusher Dontrell Hilliard. Converted quarterback Darius Bradwell, whom Louisville recruited hard as a running back, is faster than his 6'1", 235-pound frame would suggest. He learned on the job last year but still averaged 6.2 yards on 66 attempts. Speedy Texas Tech transfer Corey Dauphine is a nice complement to Bradwell, and sophomore Stephon Huderson enjoyed a strong spring.

Tulane's biggest concerns are replacing center Junior Diaz, who left for Florida Atlantic as a grad transfer, and keeping Banks healthy. Every other starter on the line returns, but the Wave will be in a world of hurt if Banks gets injured. Top backups Johnathan Brantley and Khalil McClain transferred after the season.

DEFENSE A group that finished in the middle of the pack statistically will have an altered philosophy after losing five of its top nine tacklers and moving two others to new positions. The key departure is first-team All-AAC cornerback Parry Nickerson, who tied for the fastest 40 time at the NFL Combine by any defensive back. The Wave want more speed in the lineup, having been burned for big plays too often a year ago.

Natural cornerback P.J. Hall moved to strong safety in the spring, putting a third one-on-one cover guy on the field and relegating Chase Kuerschen to reserve linebacker. Roderic Teamer, a big hitter, switched to free safety. Donnie Lewis, a third-year starter, has the skills to replace Nickerson but needs to be better with the ball in the air.

Linebacker Zachery Harris and tackle Cameron Sample are the top playmakers up front along with end Robert Kennedy, who missed the first seven games last year with a knee injury. True freshman Jeffery Johnson, a one-time Alabama and Florida State recruit who enrolled for the spring, is the likely starter at nose guard.

SPECIALISTS Fritz has shored up the coverage units, but the kicking game remains a work in progress. Walk-on Merek Glover made 8-of-9 field goals, but his longest was 37 yards. His job is not secure. Freshman punter Ryan Wright will challenge incumbent Zach Block, who averaged 39.2 yards in 2017.

FINAL ANALYSIS Fritz has this program moving in the right direction, and anything short of a bowl bid in his third year will be a disappointment. Tulane came an inch shy in 2017, finishing 5–7 when a replay official upheld a call that Banks was tackled short of the goal line on the last play at SMU.

Banks is the catalyst. If he improves as expected, the offense will be much more formidable after scoring 21 or fewer points six times last season and finishing near the bottom of the league in third-down conversions. The defense will benefit by not having to be on the field as much.



JONATHAN BANKS

"The talent still isn't all the way there, but we expect them to be much more multiple and creative with their passing game (next) season."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

WR	**5**	**Terren Encalade (Sr.)**	87	Kevin LeDee (Fr.)	
WR	**3**	**Darnell Mooney (Jr.)**	15	Jacob Robertson (So.)	
WR	**88**	**Jabril Clewis (Sr.)**	82	Jaetavian Toles (So.)	
LT	53	Keyshawn McLeod (Jr.)	**50**	**Tyler Johnson (Jr.)**	
LG		Bailey Granier (Sr.)	63	Cameron Jackel (Fr.)	
C	**64**	**Corey Dublin (So.)**	69	Hunter Knighton (Sr.)	
RG	**52**	**Dominique Briggs (Sr.)**		Nik Hogan (Fr.)	
RT	**72**	**John Leglue (Sr.)**	79	Joey Claybrook (Fr.)	
TE	**84**	**Charles Jones (Sr.)**	89	Kendall Ardoin (Sr.)	
QB	**1**	**Jonathan Banks (Sr.)**	2	Dane Ledford (So.)	
RB	10	Darius Bradwell (Jr.)	6	Corey Dauphine (Jr.)	

DEFENSE (3)

DE	34	Patrick Johnson (So.)	4	Larry Bryant (Jr.)
DT	55	Cameron Sample (So.)	48	De'Andre Williams (So.)
NG	77	Jeffery Johnson (Fr.)	78	Davon Wright (Fr.)
DE	90	Robert Kennedy (Sr.)	57	Peter Woullard (Sr.)
ILB	**40**	**Zachery Harris (Sr.)**	28	Marvin Moody (So.)
ILB	35	Lawrence Graham (Jr.)	38	KJ Vault (So.)
NB	33	Tirise Barge (So.)	25	Will Harper (Jr.)
CB	**1**	**Donnie Lewis (Sr.)**	8	Willie Langham (Fr.)
CB	23	Jaylon Monroe (So.)	26	Thakarius Keyes (Jr.)
SS	16	P.J. Hall (Jr.)	19	Taris Shenall (Sr.)
FS	**2**	**Roderic Teamer (Sr.)**	12	Sean Harper (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	62	Merek Glover (Jr.)	**KR**	6	Corey Dauphine (Jr.)
P	49	Zach Block (Sr.)	**PR**	15	Jacob Robertson (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Jonathan Banks, 219-124-1,797-5, 12 TDs
Rushing: Jonathan Banks, 148 att., 592 yds., 7 TDs
Receiving: Terren Encalade, 39 rec., 730 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Zachery Harris, 69
Sacks: Three players tied with 1.0
Interceptions: Donnie Lewis Jr., 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Willie Fritz
Record at School: 9-15 (2 years)
Career Record: 163-84 (21 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Doug Ruse
Defensive Coordinator: Jack Curtis
New Orleans, LA • Yulman Stadium (30,000)

UCF Knights

National Forecast: **31** • AAC East Prediction: **1** • Projected Record: **10-3, 7-1 AAC**

2018 SCHEDULE

Aug.	30	at Connecticut
Sept.	8	South Carolina State
Sept.	15	at North Carolina
Sept.	21	Florida Atlantic
Sept.	29	Pittsburgh
Oct.	6	SMU
Oct.	13	at Memphis
Oct.	20	at East Carolina
Nov.	1	Temple
Nov.	10	Navy
Nov.	17	Cincinnati
Nov.	23	at South Florida

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 13-0, 8-0 AAC

Aug.	31	FIU	W	61-17
Sept.	23	at Maryland	W	38-10
Sept.	30	Memphis	W	40-13
Oct.	7	at Cincinnati	W	51-23
Oct.	14	East Carolina	W	63-21
Oct.	21	at Navy	W	31-21
Oct.	28	Austin Peay	W	73-33
Nov.	4	at SMU	W	31-24
Nov.	11	Connecticut	W	49-24
Nov.	18	at Temple	W	45-19
Nov.	24	South Florida	W	49-42
Dec.	2	Memphis #	(ot) W	62-55
Jan.	1	vs. Auburn %	W	34-27

#AAC Championship %Peach Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Ke'von Ahmad, WR, Colleyville, TX
2. Eriq Gilyard, OLB, Jacksonville, FL
3. Randy Charlton, DE, Miami, FL
4. Jermaine McMillian, S, Miami, FL
5. Landon Woodson, DE, Fredericksburg, VA
6. Demetreius Mayes, DE, Miami, FL
7. Derek Gainous, CB, Miami, FL
8. Lamarius Benson, OL, Covington, GA
9. Davonchae Bryant, DE, Pensacola, FL
10. Ike Walker, DL, Gainesville, FL

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	48.2 ppg	1	1
Rushing	198.7 ypg	5	33
Passing	331.8 ypg	2	10
Total	530.5 ypg	2	5
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.3 ppg	3	52
Rushing	159.9 ypg	4	59
Passing	268.1 ypg	7	116
Total	428.0 ypg	5	94
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+17	+1.31	1	2

STAT CORNER

7.5

UCF went from averaging 4.7 yards per play in 2016 (123rd) to 7.5 in 2017 (second), easily the largest improvement in the country.

OFFENSE UCF will be expected to continue putting up big numbers even though there is a coaching — and slight system — change, as Josh Heupel takes over for Scott Frost. The concepts are similar, although Heupel may attempt to execute his offense at an even faster pace than Frost did.

The key cog that makes everything go is McKenzie Milton, who emerged last season as one of the nation's top quarterbacks while leading the Knights to a 13–0 record. Already known for his athleticism, Milton proved to be a big-time passer, finishing among the NCAA leaders in all key passing categories, including second to Baker Mayfield in passing efficiency.

Milton has plenty of weapons, notably running backs Adrian Killins and Otis Anderson and a deep wide receiver corps. He will have to adapt without last year's No. 1 receiver Tre'Quan Smith and tight end Jordan Akins, both of whom left early for the NFL Draft.

Dredrick Snelson, the second receiver option a season ago, appears ready to step up as the main guy, and UCF returns a pair of promising sophomores in Gabe Davis and Marlon Williams. Tight end will be up for grabs, though it seems Wisconsin transfer Jake Hescock could have a leg up on the competition.

UCF does have some starters to replace on the offensive line, but there are several worthy contenders in the mix to fill those spots. Trevor Elbert, a junior college transfer who began his career at Texas A&M, is likely to find a spot in the lineup.

DEFENSE There are more questions on the defensive side with UCF tasked with replacing several impact players — most notably linebacker and team leader Shaquem Griffin and cornerback Mike Hughes, an early NFL Draft entry. Plus, defensive coordinator Randy Shannon is implementing a 4-3 front, adding to the learning curve — particularly for some former outside linebackers who are now defensive ends.

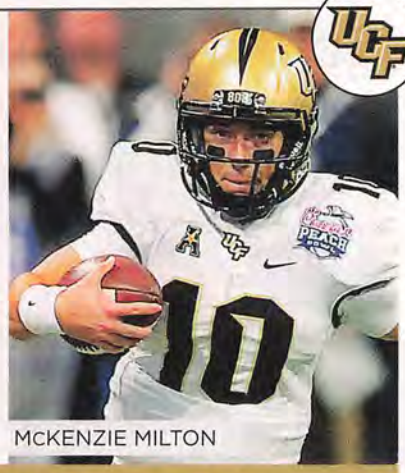
As a position group, the defensive line might have taken the biggest hit with the graduation losses of Jamiyus Pittman and Tony Guerad. The good news is that Trysten Hill returns to anchor the middle, and there are some promising players — Dedrion Bacote-Sweat and Randy Charlton among them — to provide speed coming off the edge at defensive end.

Griffin grabbed most of the attention at linebacker with his seven sacks and 13.5 tackles for a loss, but Pat Jasinski quietly led the team in tackles (104).

Though the secondary loses Hughes, everybody else returns, including senior safeties Tre Neal and Kyle Gibson plus Nevelle Clarke, who many believe will be UCF's next elite corner.

SPECIALISTS The placekicking and punting spots are solid with a pair of seniors. Matthew Wright, who connected on 13-of-18 field goals in 2017, will enter his fourth season as starter. Mac Loudermilk didn't get the opportunity to punt all that often but was always reliable when he did. The biggest question is who will replace Hughes, who had three combined touchdowns last season as the primary kick and punt returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS Heupel inherits an enviable situation but also some of the biggest expectations coming off last year's perfect season and self-proclaimed "National Championship." That said, with all the returning talent, particularly on the offensive side, UCF should be the odds-on favorite to repeat as conference champions with a good shot at returning to a New Year's Six bowl for the third time in six years.



MCKENZIE MILTON

"The battle for them is to keep recruiting aggressively and manage the coaching transition. Memphis did that well; Houston feels like it's still recovering."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)					
WR	**5**	**Dredrick Snelson (Jr.)**	11	Cam Stewart (Sr.)	
WR	**13**	**Gabriel Davis (So.)**	6	Tristan Payton (Sr.)	
WR	17	Marlon Williams (So.)	7	Emmanuel Logan-Greene (So.)	
LT	79	Trevor Elbert (Jr.)	60	Josh McMullen (Jr.)	
LG	53	Tyler Hudanick (Sr.)	61	Parker Boudreaux (So.)	
C	**72**	**Jordan Johnson (Jr.)**	65	Cole Schneider (Fr.)	
RG	73	Samuel Jackson (So.)	70	Luke Palmer (Sr.)	
RT	**78**	**Wyatt Miller (Sr.)**	74	Boman Swanson (So.)	
TE	88	Jake Hescock (So.)	89	Anthony Roberson (So.)	
QB	**10**	**McKenzie Milton (Jr.)**	14	Hayden Kingston (So.)	
RB	**9**	**Adrian Killins (Jr.)**	26	Otis Anderson (So.)	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	35	Dedrion Bacote-Sweat (So.)	95	Jeremiah Zio (Fr.)	
DT	91	Joey Connors (Sr.)	43	Aaron Cochran (Sr.)	
DT	**9**	**Trysten Hill (Jr.)**	54	A.J. Wooten (Sr.)	
DE	98	Brendon Hayes (Jr.)	58	Randy Charlton (Fr.)	
OLB	**10**	**Titus Davis (Sr.)**	28	Shawn Burgess-Becker (Jr.)	
ILB	**56**	**Pat Jasinski (Sr.)**	24	Gabriel Luyanda (Sr.)	
OLB	44	Nate Evans (Jr.)	55	Eric Mitchell (So.)	
CB	14	Nevelle Clarke (Jr.)	21	Rashard Causey (Sr.)	
CB	**20**	**Brandon Moore (So.)**	31	Aaron Robinson (So.)	
FS	**25**	**Kyle Gibson (Sr.)**	3	Antwan Collier (So.)	
SS	**23**	**Tre Neal (Sr.)**	27	Richie Grant (So.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	11	Matthew Wright (Sr.)	**KR**	9	Adrian Killins (Jr.)
P	48	Mac Loudermilk (Sr.)	**PR**	6	Tristan Payton (Sr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: McKenzie Milton, 395-265-4,037-9, 37 TDs
Rushing: Adrian Killins, 122 att., 790 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Dredrick Snelson, 46 rec., 695 yds., 8 TDs
Tackles: Pat Jasinski, 104
Sacks: Three players tied with 2
Interceptions: Kyle Gibson, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Josh Heupel
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: First Season
Offensive Coordinator: Josh Heupel
Defensive Coordinator: Randy Shannon
Orlando, FL • Spectrum Stadium (44,206)

Courtesy UCF

USF **Bulls**

National Forecast: **61** • AAC East Prediction: **3** • Projected Record: **8-4, 5-3 AAC**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Elon
Sept.	8	Georgia Tech
Sept.	15	vs. Illinois #
Sept.	22	East Carolina
Oct.	6	at Massachusetts
Oct.	12	at Tulsa
Oct.	20	Connecticut
Oct.	27	at Houston
Nov.	3	Tulane
Nov.	10	at Cincinnati
Nov.	17	at Temple
Nov.	23	UCF

#Chicago, IL

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-2, 6-2 AAC

Aug.	26	at San José State	W	42-22
Sept.	2	Stony Brook	W	31-17
Sept.	15	Illinois	W	47-23
Sept.	21	Temple	W	43-7
Sept.	30	at East Carolina	W	61-31
Oct.	14	Cincinnati	W	33-3
Oct.	21	at Tulane	W	34-28
Oct.	28	Houston	L	24-28
Nov.	4	at Connecticut	W	37-20
Nov.	16	Tulsa	W	27-20
Nov.	24	at UCF	L	42-49
Dec.	23	vs. Texas Tech #	W	38-34

#Birmingham Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Stacy Kirby, DE, Orlando, FL
2. Zion Roland, WR, Saint Petersburg, FL
3. Dwayne Boyles, DE, Miami, FL
4. Sebastian Sainterling, OG, Hollywood, FL
5. Octavious Battle, QB, Atlanta, GA
6. Vincent Davis, CB, Jacksonville, FL
7. Rashawn Yates, DE, Port Saint Lucie, FL
8. Brad Cecil, C, Jacksonville, FL
9. Jajuan Cherry, S, Okeechobee, FL
10. Trey Laing, DE, Tallahassee, FL

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	AAC	NATIONAL
Scoring	38.3 ppg	3	10
Rushing	264.1 ypg	2	8
Passing	248.9 ypg	8	50
Total	513.0 ypg	3	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	23.5 ppg	1	41
Rushing	126.9 ypg	1	21
Passing	232.8 ypg	4	76
Total	359.8 ypg	1	37
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**AAC**	**NATIONAL**
+10	+0.83	3	15

STAT CORNER

31.9

USF opponents gained at least 5.0 yards on just 31.9% of their carries, eighth in FBS and 7.9 percentage points lower than in 2016.

OFFENSE In three seasons as the USF starter, Quinton Flowers accounted for 11,618 total yards and 112 touchdowns while finishing as the FBS's ninth all-time leading rusher among quarterbacks with 3,672 yards. The obvious question: How do you replace him? The obvious answer: You don't.

Charlie Strong, entering his second season at USF, says he's confident there will be an adequate solution with either sophomore Chris Oladokun or junior Brett Kean. "Quinton was very special, a different kind of player," Strong says. "But Chris and Brett have been in the system for two years. They will do the job, and we'll do whatever we can to help them progress."

USF was No. 8 nationally in rushing last season but must replace stalwarts D'Ernest Johnson and Darius Tice (as well as Flowers). The Bulls could rely heavily on Florida transfer Jordan Cronkrite, who rushed for 302 yards in two seasons in Gainesville.

There's plenty of quality depth in the receiving corps. Senior Tyre McCants, a matchup nightmare at 5'11", 240 pounds, is a big-play performer and one of the nation's top blockers at the position. Junior Darnell Salomon began to realize his game-breaking potential last season. The Bulls also plan to exploit the size and agility of junior tight end Mitchell Wilcox.

Three starters return to the offensive line, a major catalyst behind USF's productivity, but the biggest key could be sophomore center Michael Wiggs, who's expected to take over for reliable leader Cameron Ruff.

DEFENSE USF will look to build upon massive defensive improvement that saw the Bulls finish 37th nationally in total defense after an embarrassing 120th (and an average of 482.0 yards allowed) in 2016. The Bulls became much grittier against the run while registering 36 sacks and a plus-10 turnover margin. They had 20 interceptions (tying for second nationally) and 101 tackles for a loss (fifth). Although six starters were lost, there are plenty of reinforcements.

The Bulls are blessed with ample depth and lots of mix-and-match possibilities along the defensive line, where Greg Reaves has emerged as a menacing pass rusher. In the 4-2-5 alignment, weak-side linebacker Khalid McGee, a converted safety, will be a catalyst.

Plenty of experience returns in the secondary. Aggressive senior Ronnie Hoggins inherits the important nickel slot. Coaches are high on sophomore Naytron Culpepper, who worked his way onto the field late last season. He's equally adept at cornerback or safety.

SPECIALISTS The Bulls must replace dependable placekicker Emilio Nadelman and punter Jonathan Hernandez. The competition for USF's placekicking job was hotly contested, and Jake Vivonetto had some good moments. The Bulls will entrust punting duties to sophomore Trent Schneider, a junior college transfer and native of Australia. The Bulls had nation-worst seven kicks blocked last season, a special teams red flag that must be addressed.

FINAL ANALYSIS Strong's first season at USF was a bumpy adjustment at times from Willie Taggart's Gulf Coast Offense. But now there's more of a blank slate to implement Strong's preferred style. The running game will have increased importance, especially while a new quarterback develops.

Overall, though, USF's prosperity will be defined by continued improvement on defense. Don't be surprised if the Bulls find themselves in another do-or-die showdown against UCF for an AAC Division title in the regular-season finale.



TYRE MCCANTS

"They're losing a lot on both sides, but Charlie (Strong) is really at home there. They didn't get the attention they deserved because UCF went undefeated."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

WR	86	Stanley Clerveaux (Jr.)	84	Randall St. Felix (Fr.)
WR	**3**	**Darnell Salomon (Jr.)**	81	Ryeshene Bronson (Sr.)
WR	**8**	**Tyre McCants (Sr.)**	14	Deangelo Antoine (Jr.)
LT	**55**	**Eric Mayes (Sr.)**	79	Grant Polk (Jr.)
LG	64	Demetris Harris (Fr.)	65	Marlon Gonzalez (Jr.)
C	52	Michael Wiggs (So.)	75	Jean Marcellus (Fr.)
RG	**78**	**Billy Atterbury (Jr.)**	67	Hal Roberson (So.)
RT	**77**	**Marcus Norman (Jr.)**	71	Jeremiah Stafford (Fr.)
TE	**89**	**Mitchell Wilcox (Jr.)**	87	Frederick Lloyd (Fr.)
QB	10	Chris Oladokun (So.)	7	Brett Kean (Jr.)
RB	32	Jordan Cronkrite (Jr.)	31	Elijah Mack (So.)

DEFENSE (5)

DE	**41**	**Greg Reaves (Jr.)**	55	Josh Black (Sr.)
DT	99	Kevin Bronson (Sr.)	96	Kelvin Pinkney (So.)
DT	90	Kevin Kegler (So.)	51	Mi'Cario Stanley (So.)
DE	94	Kirk Livingstone (Jr.)	56	Juwuan Brown (Sr.)
MLB	**54**	**Nico Sawtelle (Jr.)**	34	Keirston Johnson (So.)
WLB	21	Khalid McGee (Sr.)	12	Andre Polk, Jr. (So.)
CB	**23**	**Mazzi Wilkins (Sr.)**	32	Donelle Thomas (So.)
CB	14	Mike Hampton (So.)	1	Chris Barr (Sr.)
NB	**19**	**Ronnie Hoggins (Sr.)**	26	Craig Watts (So.)
SS	27	Naytron Culpepper (So.)	37	Nate Ferguson (Sr.)
FS	**18**	**Jaymon Thomas (Sr.)**	22	Mekhi LaPointe (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	42	Jake Vivonetto (Sr.)	**KR**	8	Tyre McCants (Sr.)
P	39	Trent Schneider (So.)	**PR**	14	Deangelo Antoine (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brett Kean, 11-7-64-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Trevon Sands, 26 att., 111 yds., 0 TDs
Receiving: Tyre McCants, 36 rec., 686 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Nico Sawtelle, 54
Sacks: Greg Reaves, 4.0
Interceptions: Mazzi Wilkins, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Charlie Strong
Record at School: 10-2 (1 year)
Career Record: 63-39 (8+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Sterlin Gilbert
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Jean-Mary
Tampa, FL • Raymond James Stadium (65,890)

USF Athletics

CONFERENCE USA PREVIEW

East	Predicted Order of Finish	West
1 FAU **OWLS** 11-2, 7-1		1 NORTH TEXAS **MEAN GREEN** 8-5, 6-2
2 MARSHALL **THUNDERING HERD** 8-4, 6-2		2 LOUISIANA TECH **BULLDOGS** 8-4, 6-2
3 MTSU **BLUE RAIDERS** 7-5, 6-2		3 UAB **BLAZERS** 8-4, 6-2
4 OLD DOMINION **MONARCHS** 6-6, 3-5		4 SOUTHERN MISS **GOLDEN EAGLES** 7-5, 5-3
5 FIU **PANTHERS** 5-7, 3-5		5 UTSA **ROADRUNNERS** 5-7, 4-4
6 WKU **HILLTOPPERS** 4-8, 2-6		6 RICE **OWLS** 2-11, 1-7
7 CHARLOTTE **49ERS** 2-10, 1-7		7 UTEP **MINERS** 1-11, 0-8

Conference USA Championship: **FAU over North Texas**

2018 Bowl Projections

Bahamas Bowl
FAU vs. Memphis
Heart of Dallas Bowl
North Texas vs. Minnesota
Independence Bowl
Louisiana Tech vs. Georgia Tech
Boca Raton Bowl
MTSU vs. Ohio
Hawaii Bowl
Marshall vs. Utah State
New Orleans Bowl
UAB vs. Louisiana
New Mexico Bowl
Southern Miss vs. Wyoming

2018 Unit Rankings

	QB	RB	WR/TE	OL	DL	LB	DB
CHARLOTTE	10	12	13	10	13	10	13
FAU	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
FIU	9	6	9	7	8	6	12
LOUISIANA TECH	3	10	4	3	3	11	5
MARSHALL	7	4	3	2	2	2	2
MTSU	2	7	7	6	5	3	6
NORTH TEXAS	1	5	2	9	9	7	8
OLD DOMINION	8	3	6	8	6	9	10
RICE	14	13	14	14	11	14	14
SOUTHERN MISS	6	8	10	5	10	4	11
UAB	4	2	5	4	7	8	3
UTEP	13	14	12	11	14	13	9
UTSA	12	9	11	13	4	5	7
WKU	11	11	8	12	12	12	4

PRESEASON ALL-C-USA TEAM

First-Team Offense

QB	Mason Fine	5-11	180	Jr.	North Texas
RB	Spencer Brown	6-0	235	So.	UAB
RB	Devin Singletary	5-9	200	Jr.	FAU
AP	Ty Lee	5-9	175	Jr.	MTSU
WR	Tyre Brady	6-3	201	Sr.	Marshall
WR	Teddy Veal	6-0	189	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
TE	Harrison Bryant	6-5	225	Jr.	FAU
C	Levi Brown	6-2	220	Jr.	Marshall
OL	Reggie Bain	6-4	300	Sr.	FAU
OL	Chandler Brewer	6-6	312	Sr.	MTSU
OL	James Davis	6-2	300	Sr.	UAB
OL	O'Shea Dugas	6-5	339	Sr.	Louisiana Tech

First-Team Defense

DL	Ryan Bee	6-7	282	Sr.	Marshall
DL	Jaylon Ferguson	6-5	269	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	Miles Fox	6-1	292	Sr.	Old Dominion
DL	Oshane Ximines	6-3	247	Sr.	Old Dominion
LB	Azeez Al-Shaair	6-2	228	Sr.	FAU
LB	Chase Hancock	6-2	221	Sr.	Marshall
LB	Josiah Tauaefa	6-1	240	Jr.	UTSA
CB	Shelton Lewis	6-0	185	Sr.	FAU
CB	Amik Robertson	5-9	172	So.	Louisiana Tech
S	Malik Gant	6-2	194	Jr.	Marshall
S	Jalen Young	5-11	185	Sr.	FAU

First-Team Specialists

K	Parker Shaunfield	6-0	170	Sr.	Southern Miss
P	Jack Fox	6-2	215	Sr.	Rice
KR	Isaiah Harper	5-9	168	Sr.	Old Dominion
PR	Darrell Brown	5-9	174	Jr.	Old Dominion

Second-Team Offense

QB	Brent Stockstill	6-1	197	Sr.	MTSU
RB	Jeremy Cox	5-11	217	Sr.	Old Dominion
RB	Tyler King	5-11	193	So.	Marshall
AP	Willie Wright	5-8	155	So.	FAU
WR	Jalen Guyton	6-1	208	Jr.	North Texas
WR	Andre Wilson	5-9	179	Sr.	UAB
TE	Kelvin Smith	6-2	252	Jr.	North Texas
C	Nick Clarke	6-4	312	Sr.	Old Dominion
OL	Nate Davis	6-3	311	Sr.	Charlotte
OL	Ty Pollard	6-6	315	Jr.	Southern Miss
OL	Ethan Reed	6-4	297	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	Elex Woodworth	6-4	286	Jr.	North Texas

Second-Team Defense

DL	Anthony Johnson	6-3	291	Sr.	FIU
DL	Hunter Snyder	6-7	260	Sr.	FAU
DL	Kevin Strong	6-4	295	Sr.	UTSA
DL	Roderick Young	6-1	297	Sr.	North Texas
LB	Khalil Brooks	5-11	203	Jr.	MTSU
LB	Fermin Silva	6-2	234	Sr.	FIU
LB	Rashad Smith	6-2	210	Jr.	FAU
CB	Chris Jackson	6-0	179	Jr.	Marshall
CB	Nik Needham	6-0	190	Sr.	UTEP
S	Jovante Moffatt	6-0	200	Sr.	MTSU
S	Broderick Thomas	6-1	195	Sr.	UAB

Second-Team Specialists

K	Jared Sackett	6-1	180	So.	UTSA
P	Yannis Routsas	6-3	205	Sr.	UTSA
KR	Keion Davis	6-1	213	Sr.	Marshall
PR	Andre Wilson	5-9	179	Sr.	UAB

Florida Atlantic **Owls**

National Forecast: **29** • C-USA East Prediction: **1** • Projected Record: **11-2, 7-1 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	at Oklahoma
Sept.	8	Air Force
Sept.	15	Bethune-Cookman
Sept.	22	at UCF
Sept.	29	at Middle Tennessee
Oct.	6	Old Dominion
Oct.	20	at Marshall
Oct.	27	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	3	at FIU
Nov.	10	Western Kentucky
Nov.	17	at North Texas
Nov.	24	Charlotte

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 11-3, 8-0 C-USA

Sept.	1	Navy	L	19-42
Sept.	9	at Wisconsin	L	14-31
Sept.	16	Bethune-Cookman	W	45-0
Sept.	23	at Buffalo	L	31-34
Sept.	30	Middle Tennessee	W	38-20
Oct.	7	at Old Dominion	W	58-28
Oct.	21	North Texas	W	69-31
Oct.	28	at Western Kentucky	W	42-28
Nov.	3	Marshall	W	30-25
Nov.	11	at Louisiana Tech	W	48-23
Nov.	18	FIU	W	52-24
Nov.	25	at Charlotte	W	31-12
Dec.	2	North Texas #	W	41-17
Dec.	19	vs. Akron %	W	50-3

#C-USA Championship %Boca Raton Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Nero Nelson, WR, Hollandale, MS*
2. Marcel Southall, DT, Arlington, TX*
3. Charles Cameron, DT, Morton, MS*
4. Jaylen Joyner, DE, Orlando, FL
5. Devin Hayes, DE, Orlando, FL
6. Malcolm Davidson, RB, Kissimmee, FL
7. Cordel Littlejohn, QB, Lincolnton, NC
8. B.J. Emmons, RB, Morganton, NC
9. Doug Johnson, OT, Fort White, FL
10. Teja Young, ATH, West Palm Beach, FL

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	40.6 ppg	1	8
Rushing	285.3 ypg	1	6
Passing	213.1 ypg	8	80
Total	498.4 ypg	1	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	22.7 ppg	3	34
Rushing	158.9 ypg	5	57
Passing	230.7 ypg	11	74
Total	389.6 ypg	8	63
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+13	+0.93	2	9

STAT CORNER

5.5

FAU averaged 5.5 points per trip inside the opponent's 40 in 2017, No. 1 in FBS. Devin Singletary was devastating in short yardage.

OFFENSE Never one to shy away from controversy, coach Lane Kiffin hired a 24-year-old, Charlie Weis Jr., to be the youngest offensive coordinator in modern college football history. Weis, now 25, replaces Kendal Briles, whose Baylor-style offense averaged 40.6 points last season at FAU — eighth best nationally. FAU's 2018 offense will combine some of the balance Kiffin and Weis utilized as Alabama assistants with Briles' ferociously up-tempo attack.

Option No. 1 will be Devin "Motor" Singletary. A dark-horse candidate for the Heisman Trophy, FAU's record-setting running back led the nation with 32 rushing touchdowns while stockpiling 1,920 rushing yards last season.

FAU's quarterback situation could remain fluid into the season. Former Florida State quarterback De'Andre Johnson, a fourth-year junior, played in one game last year before surgery to remove blood clots in his arm ended his season. Redshirt freshman Chris Robison is a former four-star recruit who originally enrolled at Oklahoma but was kicked out of school prior to the start of his freshman year.

A practice squad star last year, West Virginia transfer Jovon Durante joins Conference USA All-Freshman performer Willie Wright to give FAU two credible deep threats at receiver.

FAU lost three members from its interior offensive line to graduation, including All-Conference USA performers Antonyo Woods and Roman Fernandez. The addition of graduate transfer Junior Diaz from Tulane at center figures to smooth the transition.

DEFENSE FAU has a new coordinator on defense, too, hiring Tony Pecoraro away from C-USA rival Southern Miss. Pecoraro inherits a secondary that returns most of its starters for a defense that tied for second nationally with 20 interceptions. Where the Owls employed basic schemes defensively last season, rarely shifting from what was essentially a base 4-2-5, Pecoraro likes to disguise formations and blitz frequently.

Senior linebacker Azeez Al-Shaair underwent offseason surgery for the second consecutive year, this time on his elbow, and once again was limited in the spring. Missing spring didn't hurt him last season; he led the Owls with 147 tackles.

Safety Jalen Young, another senior, tied for second nationally with seven interceptions last season.

FAU lost defensive tackle Jeremiah Taleni to graduation but signed junior college transfer Charles Cameron, who will team with Steven Leggett, Hunter Snyder and Leighton McCarthy for what should be one of the fiercest pass-rush units in C-USA.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Greg Joseph and punter Ryan Rickel both graduated, leaving FAU without obvious replacements. Vladimir Rivas served as their backup during 2017, but the Owls are bringing several walk-ons to camp in the fall. Young averaged 12.4 yards returning punts last season. Kerrith Whyte had the first kickoff return for a TD in program history.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Owls underwent numerous personnel changes during the offseason, both in the coaching staff and in some key offensive positions. That turnover will likely lead to inconsistent play to start the season. By the time C-USA play begins, however, there's no reason to believe that the Lane Train won't be chugging in high gear. At the very least, Kiffin's offensive mind should have FAU headed for its second consecutive bowl appearance.



DEVIN SINGLETARY

"They've brought some great players in, but they lost a lot more than people are talking about. (Lane Kiffin) made it look easy, and it isn't."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)					
WR	7	Jovon Durante (Jr.)	82	Tavaris Harrison (Jr.)	
WR	19	DeAndre McNeal (Sr.)		Nero Nelson (Jr.)	
WR	86	**Willie Wright (So.)**		Desean Holmes (Jr.)	
LT	58	**Reggie Bain (Sr.)**	51	Ean Biancardi (So.)	
LG	60	BJ Etienne (So.)	63	Nick Weber (So.)	
C		Junior Diaz (Sr.)	65	Tarrick Thomas (Jr.)	
RG	65	Tarrick Thomas (Jr.)	66	Will Tuihalamaka (Jr.)	
RT	73	**Brandon Walton (Jr.)**	76	Robert Hawkins (So.)	
TE	40	**Harrison Bryant (Jr.)**	30	John Raine (Jr.)	
QB	14	De'Andre Johnson (Jr.)	2	Chris Robison (So.)	
RB	5	**Devin Singletary (Jr.)**	22	Tyrek Tisdale (So.)	
DEFENSE (10)					
DE	94	**Hunter Snyder (Sr.)**	45	Tim Bonner (Jr.)	
DT	56	**Steven Leggett (Sr.)**	42	William Davis (Jr.)	
DT	98	Charles Cameron (Jr.)	48	Kevin McCrary (Jr.)	
DE	13	**Leighton McCarthy (So.)**	95	Ernest Bagner (Sr.)	
MLB	2	**Azeez Al-Shaair (Sr.)**	14	**Andrew Soroh (Sr.)**	
OLB	7	**Rashad Smith (Jr.)**	49	Khantrell Burden (Sr.)	
NB	21	**Herb Miller (Sr.)**	25	Quran Hafiz (So.)	
CB	3	**Shelton Lewis (Sr.)**	37	James Pierre (So.)	
CB	26	**Chris Tooley (Jr.)**	29	Korel Smith (So.)	
SS	18	**Jalen Young (Sr.)**	6	Ahman Ross (So.)	
FS	24	Zyon Gilbert (So.)	4	Ocie Rose (Sr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	44	Vladimir Rivas (Fr.)	**KR**	6 Kerrith Whyte (Jr.)	
P	44	Vladimir Rivas (Fr.)	**PR**	18 Jalen Young (Sr.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Devin Singletary, 1-1-12-0, 0 TDs
Rushing: Devin Singletary, 301 att., 1,920 yds., 32 TDs
Receiving: Willie Wright, 56 rec., 657 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Azeez Al-Shaair, 147
Sacks: Rashad Smith, 6.0; Hunter Snyder, 6.0
Interceptions: Jalen Young, 7

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Lane Kiffin
Record at School: 11-3 (1 year)
Career Record: 46-24 (5+ years)
Offensive Coordinator: Charlie Weis Jr.
Defensive Coordinator: Tony Pecoraro
Boca Raton, FL • FAU Stadium (29,495)

Courtesy FAU Athletics

FIU **Panthers**

National Forecast: **109** • C-USA East Prediction: **5** • Projected Record: **5-7, 3-5 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Indiana
Sept.	8	at Old Dominion
Sept.	15	Massachusetts
Sept.	22	at Miami
Sept.	29	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Oct.	13	Middle Tennessee
Oct.	20	Rice
Oct.	27	at Western Kentucky
Nov.	3	Florida Atlantic
Nov.	10	at UTSA
Nov.	17	at Charlotte
Nov.	24	Marshall

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 C-USA

Aug.	31	at UCF	L	17-61
Sept.	8	vs. Alcorn State #	W	17-10
Sept.	23	at Rice	W	13-7
Sept.	30	Charlotte	W	30-29
Oct.	7	at Middle Tennessee	L	17-37
Oct.	14	Tulane	W	23-10
Oct.	28	at Marshall	W	41-30
Nov.	4	UTSA	W	14-7
Nov.	11	Old Dominion	L	30-37
Nov.	18	at Florida Atlantic	L	24-52
Nov.	24	Western Kentucky	W	41-17
Dec.	2	Massachusetts	W	63-45
Dec.	21	vs. Temple %	L	3-28

#Birmingham %Gasparilla Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Teair Tart, DT, West Philadelphia, PA*
2. Tayland Humphrey, DT, Spring, TX*
3. Jamal Anderson, S, Homestead, FL
4. Donovan Georges, ILB, Hialeah, FL
5. Ivan Thomas, HB, Miami, FL
6. Demarcus Townsend, RB, Naples, FL
7. Shaun Peterson Jr., OLB, Fort Lauderdale, FL
8. D'Antne Demery, OT, Brunswick, GA*
9. Joshua Sanders, DE, Waxahachie, TX
10. Zahir Turner, WR, Miami, FL

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.6 ppg	7	86
Rushing	159.2 ypg	10	72
Passing	233.2 ypg	6	66
Total	392.3 ypg	7	73
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	28.5 ppg	9	80
Rushing	171.3 ypg	7	72
Passing	243.6 ypg	13	96
Total	414.9 ypg	9	84
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-3	-0.23	6	85

STAT CORNER

0-4

FIU was 0-4 in games in which it had a turnover margin of minus-2 or worse in 2017. The Panthers were 8-1 otherwise.

OFFENSE FIU has to replace its statistical leader at each skill position. Quarterback Alex McGough and running back Alex Gardner both exit the program after serving as four-year starters, and leading receiver Thomas Owens is also gone, leaving a number of sizable holes for the Panthers.

That is where the bad news ends, however. FIU coach Butch Davis has done an excellent job of recruiting and developing inherited talent, and both the running back and wide receiver positions return a lot of depth and skill, providing plenty of promise for 2018.

The offensive line features multiple returning starters, led by tackles Kai Absheer and Daquane Wilkie, which will help quarterback James Morgan — a graduate transfer from Bowling Green — stay upright. Morgan's top targets will include Florida transfer C.J. Worton, Austin Maloney and Bryce Singleton.

Running back is the deepest position on the team with Napoleon Maxwell and Shawndarrius Phillips joining D'vonte Price as guys who can tote the ball effectively. Maxwell averaged 5.9 yards per carry last season.

DEFENSE FIU will have to make significant strides to improve a pass defense that was especially vulnerable down the stretch. There will be some new life in the back end of the defense with young players moving in to take over for defensive backs who were experienced but not all that talented.

The Panthers lost their two top linebackers — Treyvon Williams and Anthony Wint — from the 2017 squad, so Davis has moved promising junior Sage Lewis from outside to inside linebacker while also moving standout end Fermin Silva to outside backer to get some of the team's best players on the field.

Davis was able to make these moves because he believes his defensive line is stocked with talent. Jordan Wood is a high-caliber transfer from Georgia Tech who will take the lead at defensive end, while the middle of the front will be strong with returnees Milord Juste and Anthony Johnson being joined by junior college transfers Teair Tart and Tayland Humphrey.

In short, the best way for the pass defense to get better is for the defensive line to dominate up front and limit available time for the opposition.

SPECIALISTS Special teams will be a strength of the Panthers and can be a viable weapon to flip field position and win games. Jose Borregales was one of the league's most consistent placekickers last season, connecting on 15-of-18 field goal attempts. He did not miss a kick inside 40 yards. Couple that production with punter Stone Wilson, who will look to improve his 41.0-yard average, and there are strong returning legs for the Panthers. Singleton burst onto the scene last fall as an electric kick returner.

FINAL ANALYSIS FIU was probably ahead of schedule in Davis' first season, posting a plus-.500 record in league play for the first time since going 5–3 in the Sun Belt in 2011. While it will be a difficult road to get back to eight wins — considering the losses at the skill positions and throughout the back end of the defense — if the young talent recruited by Davis can mature quickly, there is plenty of reason to believe that the Panthers can flirt with a winning record in 2017. FIU benefits from a schedule that features five of the first seven games at home, as well as key C-USA East rivals Florida Atlantic and Marshall coming to Riccardo Silva Stadium in November.



FERMIN SILVA

"They lose a lot. (QB) Alex McGough was great and didn't get the attention. Butch (Davis) is recruiting there like a coach should be, maybe for the first time at FIU."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (4)

WR	9	Bryce Singleton (So.)	14	Darrius Scott (Jr.)	
WR	15	Austin Maloney (Jr.)	16	Tony Gaiter IV (Jr.)	
WR	11	C.J. Worton (Jr.)	19	Shermar Thornton (So.)	
LT	**65**	**Daquane Wilkie (Sr.)**	58	Devontay Taylor (So.)	
LG		D'Antne Demery (So.)	69	Chris Miller (Sr.)	
C	55	Shane McGough (So.)	**76**	**Neal Mars (Sr.)**	
RG	**60**	**Dallas Connell (Jr.)**	62	Mershawn Miller (Fr.)	
RT	**79**	**Kai Absheer (Sr.)**	64	Willa Pierre (Fr.)	
TE	87	Charlie Peterson (So.)	88	Sterling Palmer (Fr.)	
QB		James Morgan (Jr.)	8	Christian Alexander (Jr.)	
RB	23	Napoleon Maxwell (Sr.)	24	D'Vonte Price (So.)	

DEFENSE (4)

DE	90	Noah Curtis (So.)	94	Kevin Oliver (So.)
DT		Teair Tart (Jr.)	**46**	**Milord Juste (Sr.)**
DT	**91**	**Anthony Johnson (Sr.)**		Tayland Humphrey (Jr.)
DE	98	Jordan Wood (So.)		Jason Mercier (Fr.)
OLB	**7**	**Fermin Silva (Sr.)**	59	Jamal Gates (So.)
MLB	**47**	**Sage Lewis (Jr.)**	45	Rocky Jaques-Louis (Fr.)
OLB		Donovan Georges (Fr.)	44	Brandon James (So.)
CB	38	Richard Dames (So.)	20	Emmanuel Lubin (Sr.)
CB	13	Isaiah Brown (Jr.)	23	Khairi Reaser (Jr.)
S		Jamal Anderson (Fr.)	10	Olin Cushion III (Jr.)
S	36	Dorian Hall (Fr.)	10	Olin Cushion III (Jr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	30	Jose Borregales (So.)	**KR**	9	Bryce Singleton (So.)
P	6	Stone Wilson (Sr.)	**PR**	16	Tony Gaiter IV (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Maurice Alexander, 39-18-174-2, 0 TDs
Rushing: Napoleon Maxwell, 81 att., 477 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: Tony Gaiter, 34 rec., 314 yds., 1 TD
Tackles: Sage Lewis, 55
Sacks: Fermin Silva, Anthony Johnson, 7.0
Interceptions: Olin Cushion III, 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Butch Davis
Record at School: 8-5 (1 year)
Career Record: 87-48 (11 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Rich Skrosky
Defensive Coordinator: Brent Guy
Miami, FL • Riccardo Silva Stadium (20,000)

Samuel Lewis/FIU Athletics

Louisiana Tech **Bulldogs**

National Forecast: **79** • C-USA West Prediction: **2** • Projected Record: **8-4, 6-2 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	at South Alabama
Sept.	8	Southern
Sept.	22	at LSU
Sept.	29	at North Texas
Oct.	6	UAB
Oct.	13	at UTSA
Oct.	20	UTEP
Oct.	27	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	3	at Mississippi State
Nov.	10	Rice
Nov.	17	at Southern Miss
Nov.	24	Western Kentucky

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 C-USA

Sept.	2	Northwestern State	W	52-24
Sept.	9	Mississippi State	L	21-57
Sept.	16	at Western Kentucky	W	23-22
Sept.	23	at South Carolina	L	16-17
Sept.	30	South Alabama	W	34-16
Oct.	7	at UAB	L	22-23
Oct.	21	Southern Miss	L	27-34
Oct.	28	at Rice	W	42-28
Nov.	4	North Texas	L	23-24
Nov.	11	Florida Atlantic	L	23-48
Nov.	18	at UTEP	W	42-21
Nov.	25	UTSA	W	20-6
Dec.	20	vs. SMU #	W	51-10

#Frisco Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Maureese Wren, WR, Mesquite, TX
2. Isaiah Windmon, LB, Marrero, LA
3. Willie Allen, OT, River Ridge, LA*
4. BeeJay Williamson, S, Mesquite, TX
5. Derek Turner, S, Saint Francisville, LA
6. Brodrick Calhoun, CB, Mesquite, TX
7. Aaron Allen, QB, Missouri City, TX
8. Tahj Magee, ATH, Franklinton, LA
9. Davon Harris, RB, Saint Francisville, LA
10. Steven Shaw, DE, Houston, TX

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	30.5 ppg	3	48
Rushing	172.5 ypg	6	55
Passing	230.5 ypg	7	67
Total	403.0 ypg	4	62
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.4 ppg	6	54
Rushing	176.6 ypg	9	81
Passing	208.9 ypg	5	46
Total	385.5 ypg	7	60
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+13	+1.00	1	5

STAT CORNER

+13

Based on fumble recovery and interception rates, Louisiana Tech's expected turnover margin was plus-2.7. Actual margin: plus-13.

OFFENSE J'Mar Smith didn't exactly engrave his name in the annals of school history in 2017 — the Bulldogs' scoring average declined by 14 points per game compared to 2016 — but his presence alone this fall will make him something of a curiosity at Louisiana Tech: a real, live returning starter at quarterback. Barring injury, Smith will be the first Tech signal caller to top the depth chart in consecutive seasons since 2010.

It didn't help Smith's cause last year that he was working with an almost entirely revamped receiving corps. But four of the top five targets in that group will be back, including slot specialist Teddy Veal, who finished among C-USA's leaders in receptions (74), yards (950) and touchdowns (seven) en route to a second-team all-conference nod. Smith should also benefit from the return of Utah transfer Alfred Smith, who missed all of 2017 with a knee injury. The offensive line is largely intact as well, led by interior mainstays O'Shea Dugas and Ethan Reed.

Contrary to its pass-happy reputation, Tech has produced a 1,000-yard rusher each of the past four years. And while the outlook on the ground is less certain with the departures of 1K Club members Boston Scott and Jarred Craft, there are viable veteran candidates to continue the streak in Jaqwis Dancy and converted wide receiver Kam McKnight.

DEFENSE Statistically speaking, the defense was nondescript in 2017, finishing in the middle of the pack in C-USA in every almost every major category. Still, compared to 2016 it was a step in the right direction: The Bulldogs improved significantly in terms of both yards and points per game, and with a number of regulars back there's every reason to expect the upward trajectory under coordinator Blake Baker to continue.

The most decorated of the holdovers is senior end Jaylon Ferguson, a two-time All-C-USA pick with more career sacks (27.5) and tackles for a loss (40.5) to his credit than any other active FBS player. But the most intriguing playmaker may be the youngest, sophomore cornerback Amik Robertson, a Freshman All-American who started every game and picked off five passes. There is a glaring void behind him with the graduation of All-C-USA safety Secdrick Cooper, but between Robertson, fellow corner L'Jarius Sneed and safety Darryl Lewis, there's very little danger of the secondary reverting to its highly flammable 2016 form.

SPECIALISTS Departed kicker Jonathan Barnes set nearly every school record. In his place, the Bulldogs will likely turn to Brady Farlow, who handled most of the punting duties in 2017 but has yet to attempt a field goal or extra point in his career. As a punter, Farlow split time with Australian Davan Dyer, who also returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Last year's 7–6 finish was a minor step back for a program coming off three consecutive nine-win campaigns. But that wasn't unexpected following an exodus of star power from the '16 team, and the gap was arguably narrower than the records indicate: Tech went 1–4 in games decided by a touchdown or less. The season ended on the high note of a three-game winning streak, capped by a stunning, 51–10 bowl romp over SMU.

The lineup boasts as much top-to-bottom experience as any in Conference USA. This may not be Skip Holtz's most talented outfit, and the conference schedule doesn't do it any favors. But in a wide-open C-USA West race, the Bulldogs have the pieces in place to return to the top.



J'MAR SMITH

"Their roster most compares to a Power 5 program in power and size than any other program in the conference. That matters most in the defensive front seven."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)				
WR	9	**Teddy Veal (Sr.)**		Tahj Magee (Fr.)
WR	4	Alfred Smith (Jr.)	81	Cee Jay Powell (So.)
WR	86	**Rashid Bonnette (Jr.)**	84	Javonte Woodard (Jr.)
WR	89	Adrian Hardy (So.)		Maureese Wren (Fr.)
LT	75	**Michael Rodriguez (Sr.)**		Willie Allen (So.)
LG	74	**O'Shea Dugas (Sr.)**	54	Hanner Shipley (Sr.)
C	65	**Kody Russey (So.)**	55	Drew Kirkpatrick (Jr.)
RG	61	**Ethan Reed (Jr.)**	66	Shane Carpenter (Sr.)
RT	57	DeVante Lovett (Jr.)		Christian Henderson (Fr.)
QB	8	**J'Mar Smith (Jr.)**	10	Westin Elliott (Jr.)
RB	23	Jaqwis Dancy (Jr.)	**15**	**Kam McKnight (Sr.)**
DEFENSE (6)				
DE	45	**Jaylon Ferguson (Sr.)**	47	Eric Kendzior (Jr.)
DT	94	**Jordan Bradford (Sr.)**	90	Courtney Wallace (Jr.)
DT	99	**Keonatye Garner (Sr.)**	96	Ka'Derrion Mason (Jr.)
DE	95	Matthew Ydarraga (Sr.)	93	Immanuel Turner (Sr.)
LB	33	**Dae'Von Washington (Sr.)**	35	Collin Scott (Jr.)
LB	44	Brandon Durman (Sr.)	39	Randy Hogan Jr. (Sr.)
CB	21	**Amik Robertson (So.)**	30	Aaron Roberson (Sr.)
CB	24	L'Jarius Sneed (Jr.)	32	Trey Spencer (Sr.)
S	38	**Darryl Lewis (Jr.)**		Isaiah Windmon (Fr.)
S	42	James Jackson (Jr.)	7	Jaiden Cole (So.)
S	28	Jordan Baldwin (Sr.)	26	Jacorion Andrews (Fr.)
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	40	Brady Farlow (Jr.)	**KR**	23 Jaqwis Dancy (Jr.)
P	36	Davan Dyer (Sr.)	**PR**	9 Teddy Veal (Sr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: J'Mar Smith, 409-229-2,974-5, 16 TDs
Rushing: J'Mar Smith, 119 att., 371 yds., 6 TDs
Receiving: Teddy Veal, 74 rec., 950 yds., 7 TDs
Tackles: Dae'Von Washington, 70
Sacks: Jaylon Ferguson, 7.0
Interceptions: Amik Robertson, 5

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Skip Holtz
Record at School: 38-28 (5 years)
Career Record: 126-99 (18 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Todd Fitch
Defensive Coordinator: Blake Baker
Ruston, LA • Joe Aillet Stadium (28,019)

Donny J Crowe/Louisiana Tech University

MTSU Blue Raiders

National Forecast: **85** • C-USA East Prediction: **3** • Projected Record: **7-5, 6-2 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	at Vanderbilt
Sept.	8	Tennessee-Martin
Sept.	15	at Georgia
Sept.	29	Florida Atlantic
Oct.	5	at Marshall
Oct.	13	at FIU
Oct.	20	Charlotte
Oct.	27	at Old Dominion
Nov.	2	Western Kentucky
Nov.	10	at UTEP
Nov.	17	at Kentucky
Nov.	24	UAB

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 4-4 C-USA

Sept.	2	Vanderbilt	L	6-28
Sept.	9	at Syracuse	W	30-23
Sept.	16	at Minnesota	L	3-34
Sept.	23	Bowling Green	W	24-13
Sept.	30	at Florida Atlantic	L	20-38
Oct.	7	FIU	W	37-17
Oct.	14	at UAB	L	23-25
Oct.	20	Marshall	L	10-38
Nov.	4	UTEP	W	30-3
Nov.	11	at Charlotte	W	35-21
Nov.	17	at Western Kentucky (ot)	L	38-41
Nov.	25	Old Dominion	W	41-10
Dec.	16	vs. Arkansas State #	W	35-30

#Camellia Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Jarek Campbell, LB, Murfreesboro, TN
2. Chris Stamps, CB, Vicksburg, MS*
3. Luke Shiflett, QB, Dalton, GA
4. Jordan Branch, DL, Maury City, TN
5. Marcus Greer, OG, Saint Louis, MO
6. Jahlil Ryles, OG, Phenix City, AL
7. Greg Grate Jr., DB, Miami, FL
8. Avery Jones, ILB, Anaheim Hills, CA*
9. Will Gilchrist, C, Pasadena, TX*
10. Matt Martin, C, Pasadena, TX*

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.5 ppg	8	87
Rushing	142.3 ypg	11	92
Passing	251.1 ypg	3	48
Total	393.4 ypg	6	71
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.7 ppg	5	46
Rushing	134.1 ypg	3	30
Passing	223.2 ypg	8	64
Total	357.3 ypg	4	35
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-12	-0.92	13	122

STAT CORNER

6

Ty Lee was one of only six FBS receivers to combine at least 115 targets (he had 119) with a catch rate of 66% or more.

OFFENSE Keeping quarterback Brent Stockstill healthy is priority No. 1 for the Blue Raiders. He already is MTSU's all-time leading passer with 8,951 yards and 77 TDs, but he's missed nine games due to injuries over the past two seasons. And MTSU has no other quarterbacks with game experience on the roster, so there's potentially an enormous drop-off if Stockstill gets injured again.

Stockstill's top target will be Ty Lee, who led Conference USA with 79 catches last season. Patrick Smith and CJ Windham return as part of the rotation, but more wide receivers must join the mix to maximize Stockstill's final season. Speedy slot receiver Zack Dobson, one of the team's top-rated 2017 signees, has dynamic ability in the open field and should earn a role.

The line returns three starters, but there are questions about depth beyond that. The running back trio of bruiser Tavares Thomas, sure-handed Brad Anderson and big-play threat Terelle West has a high ceiling. They combined for 1,306 rushing yards and 47 receptions last season. MTSU should be among C-USA's most potent offenses, but it needs balance from the ground game to complement the passing attack.

DEFENSE The Blue Raiders made major improvements across the board in defensive coordinator Scott Shafer's first season. Year 2 carries plenty of promise with seven starters returning.

MTSU led C-USA in tackles for a loss last season, and much of that pressure is back. That includes edge-rushing linebacker Khalil Brooks (17 TFLs), former Missouri standout defensive end Walter Brady (team-high seven hurries), defensive tackle Malik Manciel (five TFLs) and some blitzing defensive backs.

Outside linebacker Darius Harris and strong safety Jovante Moffatt, a pair of seniors, are proven performers. Harris was the Camellia Bowl MVP, and he should provide guidance to budding redshirt freshman linebacker Cody Smith. Moffatt led the team with 101 tackles last season and anchors the secondary, which must develop more options at cornerback. Syracuse graduate transfer Cordell Hudson could help there.

The Blue Raiders must make major strides in takeaways after forcing only 11 turnovers in 13 games.

SPECIALISTS There are no concerns at punter, where Matt Bonadies returns to start a fourth season. Crews Holt should get the placekicker job after making his lone field goal attempt last season. The Blue Raiders must improve in kickoff coverage, as they allowed 26.4 yards per return last season, fifth worst in FBS.

FINAL ANALYSIS MTSU has not won a conference championship since sharing the Sun Belt title in coach Rick Stockstill's 2006 debut season. But the Blue Raiders have played in seven bowl games during that stretch, including the past three seasons. It's plausible to say that both trends could continue. But getting to bowl eligibility won't be an easy feat with non-conference games against SEC foes Vanderbilt, Georgia and Kentucky, and only five home games overall. Plus, two of MTSU's toughest C-USA games lead off its league schedule in a visit from Florida Atlantic and a trip to Marshall.

If the Blue Raiders can survive the first half of the schedule, they should collect wins in the back half. But again, keeping the younger Stockstill upright is paramount. MTSU is possibly a conference title contender with its senior QB behind center, but it likely posts a losing record without him.



BRENT STOCKSTILL

"Brent Stockstill coming back for another year at quarterback is huge for them. They were one team with him and a very bad team without him."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)					
WR	**8**	**Ty Lee (Jr.)**	**86**	Tavonn Salter (Sr.)	
WR	**37**	**Patrick Smith (Sr.)**	27	Ruben Garnett (Jr.)	
WR	83	Jimmy Marshall (So.)	34	Tyshawn Brown (Jr.)	
WR	**81**	**CJ Windham (Jr.)**	24	Zack Dobson (Fr.)	
LT	**55**	**Carlos Johnson (Sr.)**	68	Luke Harris (So.)	
LG	**74**	**Robert Behanan (Sr.)**	71	Angelo Owens (Sr.)	
C	72	Josh Fannin (Jr.)	53	Matt Martin (So.)	
RG	**73**	**Chandler Brewer (Sr.)**	63	Eric Golston (Jr.)	
RT	77	Amir Luckett (Jr.)	79	Cole Kirby (Fr.)	
QB	**12**	**Brent Stockstill (Sr.)**		Chance Nolan (Fr.)	
RB	35	Terelle West (Jr.)	**11**	**Brad Anderson (So.)**	
DEFENSE (7)					
DE	**56**	**Walter Brady (Sr.)**	94	Tyshun Render (Jr.)	
DT	**93**	**Malik Manciel (Jr.)**	92	Ty Nix (So.)	
DT	91	Jordan Ferguson (So.)	96	Rosheem Collins (Sr.)	
DE	43	Jahmal Jones (Sr.)	85	Darrius Liggins (Sr.)	
SLB	**30**	**Darius Harris (Sr.)**	32	Chris Melton (Sr.)	
MLB	42	Cody Smith (Fr.)	40	Avery Jones (Jr.)	
WLB	**16**	**Khalil Brooks (Jr.)**	20	DQ Thomas (So.)	
CB	4	O.J. Johnson (Sr.)	2	Chris Stamps (Jr.)	
CB	**29**	**Darryl Randolph (Sr.)**	22	Cordell Hudson (Sr.)	
SS	**7**	**Jovante Moffatt (Sr.)**	23	Wesley Bush (Sr.)	
FS	**12**	**Reed Blankenship (So.)**	38	Kendricks Gladney (Jr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Crews Holt (So.)	**KR**	25 Desmond Anderson (Sr.)	
P	99	Matt Bonadies (Sr.)	**PR**	12 Reed Blankenship (So.)	

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Brent Stockstill, 239-138-1,672-8, 16 TDs
Rushing: Tavares Thomas, 93 att., 507 yds., 9 TDs
Receiving: Ty Lee, 79 rec., 955 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Jovante Moffatt, 101
Sacks: Khalil Brooks, 7.5
Interceptions: Reed Blankenship, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Rick Stockstill
Record at School: 79-72 (12 years)
Career Record: 79-72 (12 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Tony Franklin
Defensive Coordinator: Scott Shafer
Murfreesboro, TN • Floyd Stadium (30,788)

Brent Beerends, MT Athletic Communications

Southern Miss **Golden Eagles**

National Forecast: **92** • C-USA West Prediction: **4** • Projected Record: **7-5, 5-3 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Jackson State
Sept.	8	UL Monroe
Sept.	15	at Appalachian State
Sept.	22	Rice
Sept.	29	at Auburn
Oct.	13	at North Texas
Oct.	20	UTSA
Oct.	27	at Charlotte
Nov.	3	Marshall
Nov.	10	at UAB
Nov.	17	Louisiana Tech
Nov.	24	at UTEP

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 6-2 C-USA

Sept.	2	Kentucky	L	17-24
Sept.	9	Southern	W	45-0
Sept.	16	at UL Monroe	W	28-17
Sept.	30	North Texas	L	28-43
Oct.	7	at UTSA	W	31-29
Oct.	14	UTEP	W	24-0
Oct.	21	at Louisiana Tech	W	34-27
Oct.	28	UAB	L	12-30
Nov.	4	at Tennessee	L	10-24
Nov.	11	at Rice	W	43-34
Nov.	18	Charlotte	W	66-21
Nov.	25	at Marshall	W	28-27
Dec.	27	vs. Florida State #	L	13-42

#Independence Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Deuntra Hyman, DE, Meridian, MS
2. JJ Jones, CB, Brookhaven, MS
3. Nick Dawson, DL, McDonough, GA
4. Curry Benn, CB, New Orleans, LA
5. Neil McLaurin, WR, Laurel, MS*
6. Jack Abraham, QB, Oxford, MS*
7. Ethan Edmondson, DE, Scottsboro, AL
8. Trace Clopton, C, Brookhaven, MS
9. Trivenskey Mosley, RB, Shreveport, LA
10. Tate Whatley, QB, Lakeland, FL

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	29.2 ppg	4	56
Rushing	184.5 ypg	4	41
Passing	240.1 ypg	4	55
Total	424.6 ypg	3	43
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	24.5 ppg	4	45
Rushing	138.5 ypg	4	37
Passing	193.5 ypg	3	25
Total	331.9 ypg	2	20
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-1	-0.08	5	72

STAT CORNER

-1

USM's turnover margin went from minus-17 in 2016 to minus-1 in 2017 — minus-4 in five losses and plus-3 in eight wins.

OFFENSE Southern Miss never settled on a QB in 2017, alternating between Kwadra Griggs (5–2 as a starter) and Keon Howard (3–3) depending largely on which guy was healthier from one week to the next. That uncertainty continued into the spring, when Howard split first-team reps with a junior college transfer, Jack Abraham, while Griggs rehabbed an injury. The slight edge heading into the fall probably goes to Griggs, who finished with 19 total TDs and just two interceptions in his first season in the lineup. But Abraham will have every opportunity to supplant the holdovers, as will redshirt freshman Marcelo Rodriguez and incoming signee Tate Whatley.

The rest of the offense is even more of a blank slate: At the skill positions alone, the exodus includes the second-leading rusher in school history (Ito Smith) and all three starters at wide receiver. In the backfield, at least, there's experience — seniors Tez Parks, George Payne and T'Rod Daniels boast over 2,000 career yards from scrimmage among them. Still, most of that production belongs to Payne, a sixth-year player who's sat out two of the past three seasons with injuries, and the new receiving corps consists almost entirely of sophomores.

The line is more predictable, thanks the return of starters Ty Pollard, Arvin Fletcher and Drake Dorbeck.

DEFENSE USM is also replacing most of last year's personnel on defense, beginning with outgoing coordinator Tony Pecoraro, who left for the same position at C-USA rival Florida Atlantic just before the start of spring practice. Pecoraro's successor is Tim Billings, promoted from safeties coach. His first order of business is rebuilding the secondary: All five of last year's regulars graduated, leaving only two players — sophomore Rachaun Mitchell and senior Picasso Nelson Jr. — who have seen any relevant playing time. Nelson, a three-year starter who took a medical redshirt in 2017, returned to full speed in the spring and looks like a lock to resume his old nickel role.

The outlook is better along the front seven, especially at defensive end, where senior bookends LaDarius Harris and Darian Yancey have combined for 41 career starts, and linebacker, where Racheem Boothe earned Freshman All-America notices as a redshirt.

SPECIALISTS Senior Parker Shaunfield has one of the biggest legs in the league, connecting on all four of his field goal attempts beyond 40 yards last year en route to a first-team All-C-USA nod. Punting duties will fall again to Zac Everett, who averaged 40.6 yards with just four touchbacks in 64 attempts.

FINAL ANALYSIS For years Southern Miss was a beacon of stability. But most of the past decade has been defined by volatility, and despite winning records in each of coach Jay Hopson's first two seasons, it's been hard to predict which team will show up on a given Saturday. With good health, consistency at quarterback and a few breaks, every game on the schedule is winnable outside of a non-conference trip to Auburn. Yet that's been the case the past two years, too, and both of those teams wound up third in C-USA's West Division.

The influx of new starters and ongoing uncertainty behind center make the 2018 forecast even hazier. Settling on a reliable week-in, week-out starter will be the top priority; if Griggs, Abraham, or one of the younger players emerges as that guy, filling the vacancies around him should be par for the course. If not, the absence of an all-purpose workhorse on the level of Smith will likely loom very large.



KWADRA GRIGGS

"They're mean on defense, and they evaluate talent aggressively so that they can make the best of recruiting underneath the SEC."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

WR	16	Quez Watkins (So.)	82	Trevor Terry (Jr.)	
WR	87	Tim Jones (So.)	13	Neil McLaurin (Jr.)	
WR	3	Jaylond Adams (So.)	18	De'Michael Harris (Jr.)	
LT	**79**	**Drake Dorbeck (Jr.)**	71	Paul Gainer (So.)	
LG	**63**	**Arvin Fletcher (So.)**	75	Travion Clayton (So.)	
C	57	Trace Clopton (Fr.)	67	Hayden Sturdevant (So.)	
RG	**76**	**Ty Pollard (Jr.)**	66	Wyatt Richthofen (So.)	
RT	50	Woodlyson Alcius (So.)	73	Tairek Johnson (Jr.)	
TE	**1**	**Jay'Shawn Washington (Sr.)**	12	Steven Anderson (Fr.)	
QB	**7**	**Kwadra Griggs (Sr.)**	2	Keon Howard (Jr.)	
RB	8	Tez Parks (Sr.)	28	T'Rod Daniels (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (3)

DE	**43**	**LaDarius Harris (Sr.)**	99	Jacques Turner (So.)
DT	17	Delmond Landry (Sr.)	55	Demarrio Smith (Jr.)
DT		Isaiah Johnson (Jr.)	51	Von'Darius Freeman (Jr.)
DE	22	Darian Yancey (Sr.)	30	Paxton Schrimsher (Jr.)
LB	**41**	**Racheem Boothe (So.)**	5	Walden Davis III (Sr.)
LB	**26**	**Jeremy Sangster (Sr.)**	37	Sherrod Ruff (Sr.)
CB	21	Rachaun Mitchell (So.)	29	Ernest Gunn (Jr.)
CB	7	Ty Williams (Jr.)		Jemaurian Jones (Fr.)
NB	13	Picasso Nelson Jr. (Sr.)	39	WyDale Flott (So.)
S	1	Xavier Marion (Sr.)		Nicario Harper (Fr.)
S	46	Tyler Barnes (So.)		Ky'el Hemby (So.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	21	Parker Shaunfield (Sr.)	KR	28	T'Rod Daniels (Sr.)
P	29	Zac Everett (Jr.)	PR	16	Quez Watkins (So.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Kwadra Griggs, 265-148-1,879-2, 16 TDs
Rushing: Tez Parks, 53 att., 272 yds., 1 TD
Receiving: Quez Watkins, 23 rec., 337 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Racheem Boothe, 79
Sacks: Paxton Schrimsher, 5.5
Interceptions: None

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Jay Hopson
Record at School: 15-11 (2 years)
Career Record: 47–28 (6 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Shannon Dawson
Defensive Coordinators: Tim Billings, Derek Nicholson
Hattiesburg, MS • M.M. Roberts Stadium (36,000)

Courtesy Southern Miss Athletics

UAB **Blazers**

National Forecast: **84** • C-USA West Prediction: **3** • Projected Record: **8-4, 6-2 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Sept.	1	Savannah State
Sept.	8	at Coastal Carolina
Sept.	15	Tulane
Sept.	29	Charlotte
Oct.	6	at Louisiana Tech
Oct.	13	at Rice
Oct.	20	North Texas
Oct.	27	at UTEP
Nov.	3	UTSA
Nov.	10	Southern Miss
Nov.	17	at Texas A&M
Nov.	24	at Middle Tennessee

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 6-2 C-USA

Sept.	2	Alabama A&M	W	38-7
Sept.	9	at Ball State	L	31-51
Sept.	16	Coastal Carolina	W	30-23
Sept.	23	at North Texas	L	43-46
Oct.	7	Louisiana Tech	W	23-22
Oct.	14	Middle Tennessee	W	25-23
Oct.	21	at Charlotte	(ot) L	24-25
Oct.	28	at Southern Miss	W	30-12
Nov.	4	Rice	W	52-21
Nov.	11	at UTSA	W	24-19
Nov.	18	at Florida	L	7-36
Nov.	25	UTEP	W	28-7
Dec.	22	vs. Ohio #	L	6-41

#Bahamas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. CD Daniels, CB, Birmingham, AL
2. Jalen Rayam, OLB, Alabaster, AL
3. Starling Thomas V, CB, Birmingham, AL
4. Michael Fairbanks, DE, Powder Springs, GA
5. Jaylen Key, DE, Tallahassee, FL
6. Danyton Thomas, CB, Opelika, AL
7. Dylan Hopkins, QB, Maryville, TN
8. Xavier Lanier, CB, Gordo, AL
9. Deshaun Oliver, S, Birmingham, AL
10. Austin Watkins, WR, North Fort Myers, FL*

*junior college transfer

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	27.8 ppg	5	71
Rushing	183.2 ypg	5	44
Passing	180.5 ypg	10	100
Total	363.8 ypg	10	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	25.6 ppg	7	55
Rushing	175.9 ypg	8	80
Passing	189.7 ypg	2	22
Total	365.6 ypg	5	41
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
+4	+0.31	4	40

STAT CORNER

100

UAB returns 100% of its QB passing yards, 100% of its RB rushing yards, and 99% of its WR/TE receiving yards in 2018.

OFFENSE UAB returns most of an offense that ranked 10th in Conference USA, but the Blazers will have a new look after coach Bill Clark dismissed coordinator Les Koenning and re-hired Bryant Vincent, the architect of the program's 2014 attack that set several school records.

Quarterback A.J. Erdely could contend for league honors after producing 29 total touchdowns in 2017. Conference USA Freshman of the Year Spencer Brown returns after rushing for 1,329 yards (the most ever by a UAB freshman), and the unit will be even better with Ole Miss transfer Jarrion Street and former Michigan Wolverine Kingston Davis supplying depth.

Every key receiver is back, including top pass catcher Andre Wilson and fellow seniors Collin Lisa, Xavier Ubosi, Ronnie Turner and Sederian Copeland. UAB hopes to have slot receiver Jonathan Haden back from a knee injury before the season, and Clark signed junior college transfers Austin Watkins and Kendall Parham to challenge for time. The tight end position is deep as senior Donnie Lee moved from running back after catching 19 passes, joining returning key players Hayden Pittman and Logan Scott as well as two players who missed last season due to injury, Thair Blakes and Skylor Clinton.

Rishard Cook lost 35 pounds in the offseason and is primed for a starting role at left guard after starting four games last year.

DEFENSE The defense returns several key players but must replace team leaders such as Darious Williams, Shaq Jones and Tevin Crews, who were each with the program before it was shut down in 2014.

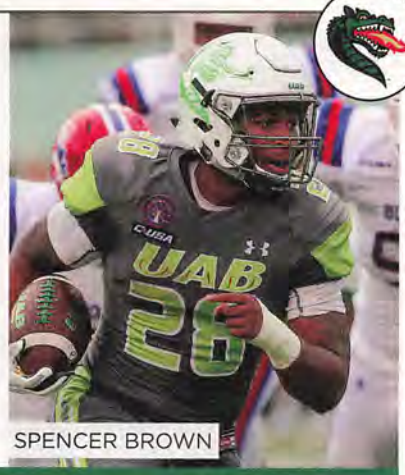
Safety Broderick Thomas established himself as one of the conference's top defenders in his first year with the program, and he'll be counted on for leadership and big plays in a secondary that will rely on young players to provide depth behind veterans Duke Culver, Will Dawkins, D.A. Williams and Brontae Harris. UAB trains its defensive backs to play multiple positions.

UAB was at its best when 6'7" Stacy Keely was healthy last year. He has moved to the Jack linebacker spot and should be one of C-USA's best edge rushers. The defensive line is a powerful group led by breakout candidate Garrett Marino, Anthony Rush and Quindarius Thagard. Watch for Blake McClain, who missed last year due to injury, and newcomers Antonio Moultrie and Fish McWilliams to contribute early.

Sophomore linebacker Thomas Johnston turned down Power 5 offers to sign with UAB. Fitzgerald Mofor and Chris Woolbright are also experienced, but UAB needs youngsters behind them to step up.

SPECIALISTS UAB returns kicker Nick Vogel and punter Joel Dixon, though both could stand to improve. UAB was 13th in Conference USA in net punting, and while Vogel was perfect on field goals inside of 40 yards, he was just 5-of-9 past that mark. Wilson is UAB's top weapon in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS UAB was expected to be one of the worst teams in the FBS ranks after returning from a two-year hiatus. Didn't happen. The Blazers won eight games overall and went 6–2 in the league, cementing Clark's reputation as one of the most underrated coaches in the nation. Expectations will be high this year, due in part to the return of Vincent as the offensive coordinator and a defense that should remain stout despite the loss of some key personnel. This team should be a factor in the C-USA West title chase.



SPENCER BROWN

"Not enough can be said about the incredible job done by Bill Clark. But now we know what they're capable of, and they aren't creeping up on anyone this year."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)					
WR	3	**Andre Wilson (Sr.)**	6	Austin Watkins (Jr.)	
WR	8	**Ronnie Turner (Sr.)**	7	Xavier Ubosi (Sr.)	
WR	13	Collin Lisa (Sr.)	10	Sederian Copeland (Sr.)	
LT	51	**James Davis (Sr.)**	53	Colby Ragland (Jr.)	
LG	71	Rishard Cook (Sr.)	50	David Galten (Jr.)	
C	72	**Lee Dufour (Jr.)**	55	Andrew Smith (Jr.)	
RG	58	**Malique Johnson (Sr.)**	73	Patrick Nuss (Fr.)	
RT	57	**Justice Powers (Sr.)**	74	Bryant Novick (Sr.)	
TE	44	**Logan Scott (Sr.)**	38	Hayden Pittman (So.)	
QB	11	**A.J. Erdely (Sr.)**	17	Tyler Johnston III (So.)	
RB	28	**Spencer Brown (So.)**	5	Jarrion Street (Jr.)	
DEFENSE (6)					
DE	5	Zachary Williams (Sr.)	92	Antonio Moultrie (So.)	
NT	47	Anthony Rush (Sr.)	41	Quindarius Thagard (Sr.)	
DT	44	**Garrett Marino (Jr.)**	95	Blake McClain (Sr.)	
LB	97	**Stacy Keely (Sr.)**	99	Jamell Garcia-Williams (Sr.)	
LB	7	Thomas Johnston (So.)	20	Kris Moll (So.)	
LB	52	**Fitzgerald Mofor (Jr.)**	27	Chris Woolbright (Sr.)	
CB	33	Brontae Harris (So.)	14	Dy'Jonn Turner (So.)	
CB	1	**D.A. Williams (Sr.)**	17	Will Boler (Fr.)	
FS	22	**Broderick Thomas (Sr.)**	11	David Acfalle (Fr.)	
SS	21	**Will Dawkins (Jr.)**	2	Mar'Sean Diggs (Sr.)	
STAR	8	Duke Culver (Sr.)	12	Grayson Cash (Fr.)	
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Nick Vogel (Jr.)	**KR**	18	Kailon Carter (Sr.)
P	37	Joel Dixon (Jr.)	**PR**	3	Andre Wilson (Sr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: A.J. Erdely, 338-205-2,331-4, 16 TDs
Rushing: Spencer Brown, 250 att., 1,329 yds., 10 TDs
Receiving: Andre Wilson, 54 rec., 677 yds., 6 TDs
Tackles: Broderick Thomas, 95
Sacks: Stacy Keely, 4.0
Interceptions: Broderick Thomas, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bill Clark
Record at School: 14-11 (2 years)
Career Record: 25-15 (3 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Bryant Vincent
Defensive Coordinator: David Reeves
Birmingham, AL • Legion Field (72,000)

Jimmy Mitchell/UAB Athletics

WKU Hilltoppers

National Forecast: **111** • C-USA East Prediction: **6** • Projected Record: **4-8, 2-6 C-USA**

2018 SCHEDULE

Aug.	31	at Wisconsin
Sept.	8	Maine
Sept.	15	at Louisville
Sept.	22	at Ball State
Sept.	29	Marshall
Oct.	13	at Charlotte
Oct.	20	Old Dominion
Oct.	27	FIU
Nov.	2	at Middle Tennessee
Nov.	10	at Florida Atlantic
Nov.	17	UTEP
Nov.	24	at Louisiana Tech

2017 RESULTS

RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 C-USA

Sept.	2	Eastern Kentucky	W	31-17
Sept.	9	at Illinois	L	7-20
Sept.	16	Louisiana Tech	L	22-23
Sept.	23	Ball State	W	33-21
Oct.	7	at UTEP	W	15-14
Oct.	14	Charlotte	W	45-14
Oct.	20	at Old Dominion	W	35-31
Oct.	28	Florida Atlantic	L	28-42
Nov.	4	at Vanderbilt	L	17-31
Nov.	11	at Marshall	L	23-30
Nov.	17	Middle Tennessee (ot)	W	41-38
Nov.	24	at FIU	L	17-41
Dec.	16	vs. Georgia State #	L	17-27

#Cure Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kevaris Thomas, QB, Lakeland, FL
2. Arthur Brathwaite, S, Miami, FL
3. B.J. Crim, S, Ocala, FL
4. Garland LaFrance, RB, New Orleans, LA
5. Lichon Terrell, DT, Hogansville, GA
6. Spencer Gaddis, WR, Alpharetta, GA
7. Russell Brown, WR, Lehigh Acres, FL
8. Mario Wright, ILB, Flossmoor, IL
9. Anthony Spurlock, WR, New Orleans, LA
10. Gino Appleberry, RB, Fairburn, GA

2017 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	C-USA	NATIONAL
Scoring	25.5 ppg	8	87
Rushing	60.8 ypg	14	130
Passing	335.0 ypg	1	7
Total	395.8 ypg	5	69
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
Scoring	26.8 ppg	8	66
Rushing	170.3 ypg	6	70
Passing	206.8 ypg	4	40
Total	377.2 ypg	6	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**C-USA**	**NATIONAL**
-8	-0.62	9	111

STAT CORNER

791

WKU netted only 791 rushing yards in 2017 and was one of only two teams nationally to rush for fewer than 1,000 yards.

OFFENSE One year after leading the nation with 7.65 yards per play in 2016, WKU plummeted to 96th (5.32) in its first year under coach Mike Sanford, who plans to spend more hands-on time with his offense in 2018. He coached quarterbacks at Stanford, Boise State and Notre Dame and was coordinator with the Broncos and Fighting Irish. He'll get back to his roots this season by calling plays and working with the QBs.

Sanford must pick a quarterback replacement for Mike White, who totaled 8,540 yards and 63 touchdowns the last two seasons. Drew Eckels is the room's veteran and can add a QB running dimension to WKU's offense. True freshman Kevaris Thomas — a rare four-star recruit (247Sports) for the Hilltoppers — could also play at some point this fall.

WKU's last rushing play of 20 yards or more came in the 2016 Boca Raton Bowl. Joshua Samuel redshirted last year but came on in the spring as a running back with speed who isn't afraid to run inside. Jacquez Sloan is a speedy sophomore receiver who became a deep threat as a freshman.

The production of young skill players is dependent on an offensive line that was bad in 2017. WKU surrendered 3.7 sacks per game, contributing to an FBS-worst mark of 2.0 yards per carry. Sanford hired TJ Woods, formerly of Wisconsin and Oregon State, to change that.

DEFENSE While WKU's offense gave up 48 sacks last season, its own defense tallied just 12. An absent pass rush put pressure on the Hilltoppers' secondary, and the defense cracked down the stretch. WKU's final seven opponents all scored at least 27 points after none of the first six reached 24.

Sophomore DeAngelo Malone is the Toppers' quickest pass rusher. Coaches hope he can pack muscle onto his 6'4", 215-pound frame and withstand the rigors of a full season in the trenches.

Defensive tackle Evan Sayner returns after suffering a knee injury midway through the 2017 season. Linebacker Ben Holt — son of former Hilltopper D-coordinator Nick Holt — will see more time after all-conference pick Joel Iyiegbuniwe left for the NFL Draft.

The secondary is the strength of coordinator Clayton White's defense. Nickel back Ta'Corian Darden, cornerback DeAndre Farris and safeties Drell Greene and Devon Key all return as starters. Key ranked second for WKU last season with 94 tackles. Farris was No. 19 nationally with 13 pass breakups.

SPECIALISTS Ryan Nuss missed five kicks last year from 39 yards or less. A botched Jake Collins fake punt attempt turned the tide late in a defeat at FIU, while WKU fell victim to a late Florida Atlantic punt fake in a loss to the Owls. Nuss and Collins are back. The Hilltoppers will need new kick and punt returners after the graduations of Cameron Echols-Luper, Nacarius Fant and Kylen Towner.

FINAL ANALYSIS WKU combined for 23 wins and two C-USA titles in 2015 and '16, then fell last season to 6–7 — the team's first losing record since 2010. A 1–5 finish ended Sanford's honeymoon, but reaching bowl eligibility for the eighth straight year with an unproven roster would make for a positive 2018. The Hilltoppers have young talent thanks to strong 2017 and '18 recruiting classes that focused on talent-rich Georgia. The more those players see the field this season, the more experience they'll gain for what Sanford hopes is a return to the top of C-USA.



LUCKY JACKSON

"Mike White was a great quarterback but didn't really fit what (Mike) Sanford likes to do. Expect them to be more mobile at that position."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

WR	11	Lucky Jackson (Jr.)	16	Quin Jernighan (Jr.)	
WR	2	Jacquez Sloan (So.)	7	Jahcour Pearson (So.)	
WR	9	Xavier Lane (So.)		Anthony Spurlock (Fr.)	
LT	68	Parker Howell (Jr.)	76	Preston Mixon (Fr.)	
LG	**63**	**Miles Pate (Jr.)**	61	Jordan Meredith (So.)	
C	**64**	**Dennis Edwards (Sr.)**	67	Seth Joest (So.)	
RG	**74**	**Tyler Witt (So.)**	53	Caleb Etheridge (Fr.)	
RT	70	Cole Spencer (So.)	71	R.J. Scaife (Jr.)	
TE	85	Mik'Quan Deane (Sr.)	42	Kyle Fourtenbary (So.)	
QB	4	Drew Eckels (Sr.)		Kevaris Thomas (Fr.)	
RB	25	Joshua Samuel (Fr.)	32	D'Andre Ferby (Sr.)	

DEFENSE (7)

DE	43	Carson Jordan (Jr.)	**95**	**Heath Wiggins (Jr.)**
DT	**96**	**Julien Lewis (Sr.)**	53	Jeremy Darvin (So.)
DT	55	Evan Sayner (Sr.)	55	Jalen Madden (So.)
DE	10	DeAngelo Malone (So.)	35	Nicholas Coffey (Jr.)
LB	**25**	**Masai Whyte (Sr.)**	50	Der'Quione Mobley (Sr.)
LB	44	Ben Holt (Jr.)	28	Demetrius Cain (So.)
NB	**15**	**Ta'Corian Darden (Jr.)**	31	Antwon Kincade (So.)
CB	**22**	**DeAndre Farris (Sr.)**	26	Dionté Ruffin (So.)
CB	24	Roger Cray (So.)	5	LA Rogers-Anderson (So.)
S	**9**	**Drell Greene (Sr.)**	36	Kyle Bailey (So.)
S	**2**	**Devon Key (So.)**	8	Malik Occiur (Fr.)

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Ryan Nuss (Sr.)	**KR**	2	Jacquez Sloan (So.)
P	49	Jake Collins (Sr.)	**PR**	11	Lucky Jackson (Jr.)

Returning Starters in Bold

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Drew Eckels, 11-8-86-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: D'Andre Ferby, 117 att., 373 yds., 3 TDs
Receiving: Lucky Jackson, 39 rec., 600 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Devon Key, 94
Sacks: Two players tied with 1.5
Interceptions: Drell Greene, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Mike Sanford
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Junior Adams
Defensive Coordinator: Clayton White
Bowling Green, KY • Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (22,113)

Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

QUARTERBACK *Rankings*



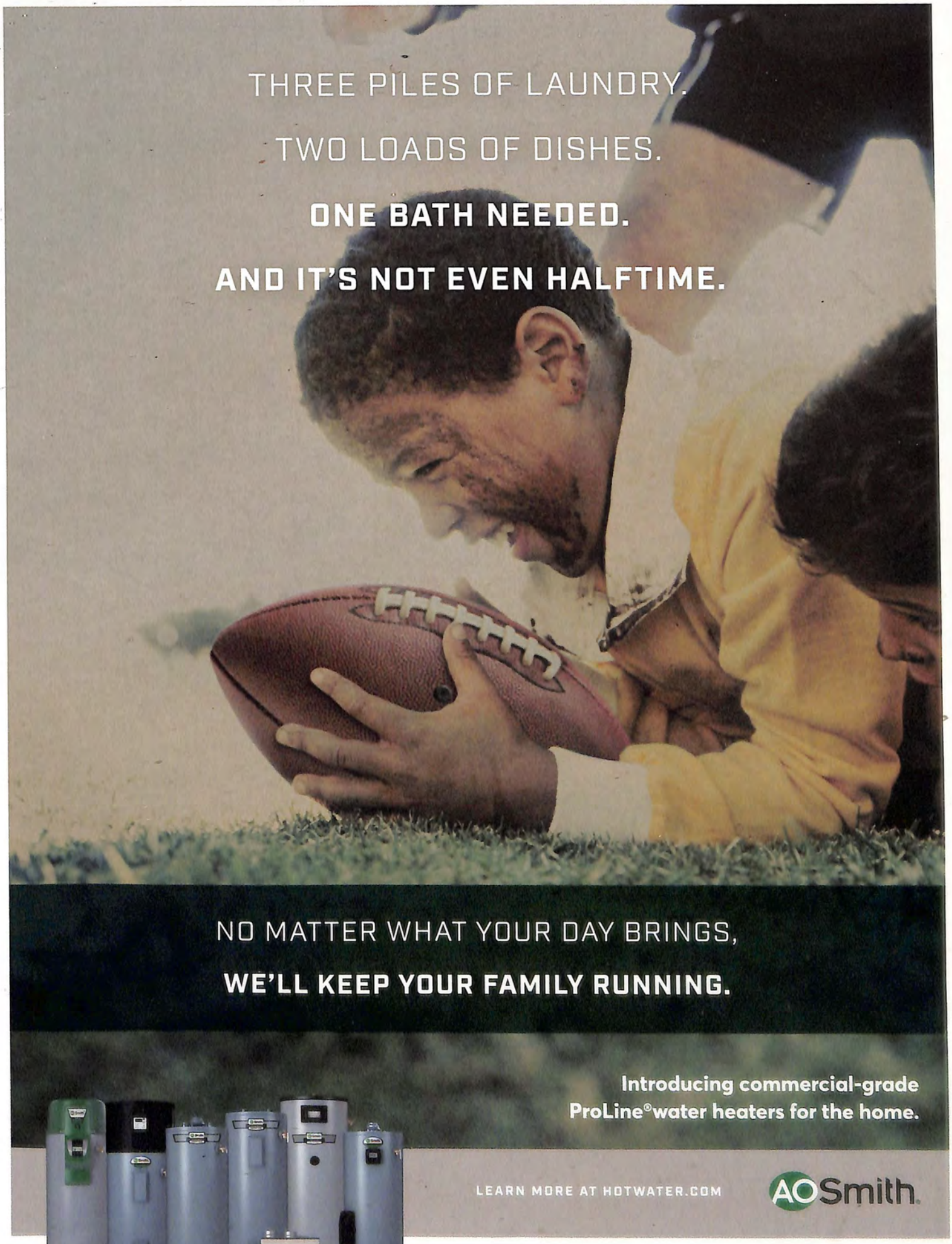
Quarterback is the most important position in football — arguably, it's the most important position in sports. Just for fun, we took on the difficult task of ranking all 130 starting quarterbacks in the FBS ranks. We considered several factors, including 2017 statistics, projections for 2018, value to the team, recruiting profile and overall talent.
Note: This ranking might differ slightly from the quarterback unit rankings found elsewhere in the magazine. Those factor a team's entire quarterback situation, not just the starter.





1. **Will Grier,** West Virginia
2. **Tua Tagovailoa,** Alabama
3. **Khalil Tate,** Arizona
4. **Trace McSorley,** Penn State
5. **McKenzie Milton,** UCF
6. **Drew Lock,** Missouri
7. **Jake Browning,** Washington
8. **Justin Herbert,** Oregon
9. **Jarrett Stidham,** Auburn
10. **Nick Fitzgerald,** Mississippi State
11. **Jake Fromm,** Georgia
12. **Brian Lewerke,** Michigan State
13. **Ryan Finley,** NC State
14. **Jake Bentley,** South Carolina
15. **Mason Fine,** North Texas
16. **Brent Stockstill,** Middle Tennessee
17. **Brett Rypien,** Boise State
18. **Josh Jackson,** Virginia Tech
19. **Kelly Bryant,** Clemson
20. **Malcolm Perry,** Navy
21. **Justice Hansen,** Arkansas State
22. **Kyle Shurmur,** Vanderbilt
23. **Alex Hornibrook,** Wisconsin
24. **Nathan Rourke,** Ohio
25. **Nate Stanley,** Iowa
26. **Dwayne Haskins,** Ohio State
27. **James Blackman,** Florida State
28. **Eric Dungey,** Syracuse
29. **Jordan Ta'amu,** Ole Miss
30. **Tyler Huntley,** Utah
31. **Charlie Brewer,** Baylor
32. **Kyle Kempt,** Iowa State
33. **Daniel Jones,** Duke
34. **Malik Rosier,** Miami (Fla.)
35. **TaQuon Marshall,** Georgia Tech
36. **Manny Wilkins,** Arizona State
37. **Clayton Thorson,** Northwestern
38. **K.J. Costello,** Stanford
39. **Kyler Murray,** Oklahoma
40. **Sam Ehlinger,** Texas
41. **Nick Starkel,** Texas A&M
42. **David Blough,** Purdue
43. **Jonathan Banks,** Tulane
44. **Gus Ragland,** Miami (Ohio)
45. **Tyree Jackson,** Buffalo
46. **Caleb Evans,** ULM
47. **D'Eriq King,** Houston
48. **Ben Hicks,** SMU
49. **Brandon Wimbush,** Notre Dame
50. **Ty Gangi,** Nevada
51. **Brandon Peters,** Michigan
52. **Kasim Hill,** Maryland
53. **Steven Montez,** Colorado
54. **Skylar Thompson,** Kansas State
55. **Ross Bowers,** California
56. **J'Mar Smith,** Louisiana Tech
57. **A.J. Erdely,** UAB
58. **Marcus McMaryion,** Fresno State
59. **Armani Rogers,** UNLV
60. **Christian Chapman,** San Diego State
61. **Andrew Ford,** UMass
62. **Arion Worthman,** Air Force
63. **Kenny Pickett,** Pittsburgh
64. **Jawon Pass,** Louisville
65. **Kendall Hinton,** Wake Forest
66. **Keller Chryst,** Tennessee
67. **Marcus Childers,** Northern Illinois
68. **Peyton Ramsey,** Indiana
69. **Shawn Robinson,** TCU
70. **JT Daniels,** USC
71. **Frank Nutile,** Temple
72. **Chazz Surratt,** North Carolina
73. **Anthony Brown,** Boston College
74. **Devon Modster,** UCLA
75. **David Moore,** Memphis
76. **Dru Brown,** Oklahoma State
77. **De'Andre Johnson,** FAU
78. **Kwadra Griggs,** Southern Miss
79. **Kato Nelson,** Akron
80. **Jon Wassink,** Western Michigan
81. **Stephen Calvert,** Liberty
82. **Myles Brennan,** LSU
83. **Hayden Moore,** Cincinnati
84. **Alex Thomson,** Marshall
85. **Jarret Doege,** Bowling Green
86. **Jordan Love,** Utah State
87. **Steven Williams,** Old Dominion
88. **Gardner Minshew,** Washington State
89. **Cole Kelley,** Arkansas
90. **Tanner Mangum,** BYU
91. **Feleipe Franks,** Florida
92. **Tristan Gebbia,** Nebraska
93. **Tanner Morgan,** Minnesota
94. **Terry Wilson,** Kentucky
95. **K.J. Carta-Samuels,** Colorado State
96. **Riley Neal,** Ball State
97. **Kelvin Hopkins,** Army
98. **Kaleb Barker,** Troy
99. **Jordan Davis,** Louisiana
100. **McLane Carter,** Texas Tech
101. **Bryce Perkins,** Virginia
102. **James Morgan,** FIU
103. **Zac Thomas,** Appalachian State
104. **Mitchell Guadagni,** Toledo
105. **Chris Oladokun,** USF
106. **Luke Skipper,** Tulsa
107. **Hasaan Klugh,** Charlotte
108. **Peyton Bender,** Kansas
109. **Jake Luton,** Oregon State
110. **Tyler Wiegers,** Eastern Michigan
111. **Shai Werts,** Georgia Southern
112. **Tevaka Tuioti,** New Mexico
113. **Giovanni Rescigno,** Rutgers
114. **Tony Poljan,** Central Michigan
115. **Cam Thomas,** Illinois
116. **Drew Eckels,** WKU
117. **Dan Ellington,** Georgia State
118. **Cephus Johnson,** South Alabama
119. **Nick Smith,** Wyoming
120. **Woody Barrett,** Kent State
121. **Nick Jeanty,** New Mexico State
122. **Josh Love,** San Jose State
123. **Cole McDonald,** Hawaii
124. **Cordale Grundy,** UTSA
125. **Ryan Metz,** UTEP
126. **David Pindell,** UConn
127. **Willie Jones,** Texas State
128. **Jackson Tyner,** Rice
129. **Reid Herring,** East Carolina
130. **Kilton Anderson,** Coastal Carolina

Grier: Bruce Schwartzman; Marshall: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Pass: John Sommers II


THREE PILES OF LAUNDRY.
TWO LOADS OF DISHES.
ONE BATH NEEDED.
AND IT'S NOT EVEN HALFTIME.
NO MATTER WHAT YOUR DAY BRINGS,
WE'LL KEEP YOUR FAMILY RUNNING.
Introducing commercial-grade
ProLine® water heaters for the home.
LEARN MORE AT HOTWATER.COM
A.O. Smith

PURINA

THEY'RE ALWAYS GOOD SPORTS.

Help keep your pets happy, healthy and strong.

Your active pets will love the variety Purina's trusted family of brands has to offer. You'll love the nutritional science behind our pet products. Count on Purina for every stage of your pet's life. You'll find the right size and variety for every occasion.

Learn more at Purina.com

All trademarks are owned by Société des Produits Nestlé S.A., Vevey, Switzerland, or are used with permission.